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AUTHOR – AUTEUR

Full Name of Author – Nom complet de l'auteur: Dianne Elizabeth Van Hesteren

Date of Birth – Date de naissance: July 29, 1946

Canadian Citizen – Citoyen canadien: ☑ Yes / Oui ☐ No / Non

Country of Birth – Lieu de naissance:

Permanent Address – Résidence fixe:
432 Simon Fraser Cres.
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7H 3T7

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LIFE IN CLASSROOMS
FOR GIFTED CHILDREN

by

DIANNE VAN HESTEREN

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(Signed) Dianne E. Van Hesteren

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

432 Simon Fraser Crescent
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7H 3T7

DATED April 24, 1985

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance a thesis entitled "Life in Classrooms for Gifted Children" submitted by Dianne Van Hesteren in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

D. Massey
Supervisor

External Examiner

Date April 24, 1985

DEDICATION

To my husband, Frank,
my son, Patrick, and
my daughter, Sherry Lynn

ABSTRACT

This research was conducted in order to arrive at a better understanding of the lived experience of gifted students in a classroom for the academically talented from the perspective of their child culture. The improvement of the quality of education for the gifted was the ultimate goal of the study and this was thought to be most possible if the classroom life of gifted and talented students could be described from their point of view.

A qualitative research approach was used in which information about the experiences of thirty grade six students was collected through the use of participant observations, fieldnotes, interviews, children's illustrations, and letters. Although individual students and groups of students often had different interpretations of their experiences in the classroom context, certain themes, or patterns, emerged from the data that helped to make the child culture in the classroom more understandable. The themes included: the expectations of gifted students that are maintained by themselves and by peers and adults; the tensions and conflicts experienced by the academically talented due to the expectations and choices with which they are confronted; the importance of the social experience in the classroom; and their perception of the curricular

demands and activities that were offered in the program for the academically talented. Expectations experienced by the children in the classroom context and the tensions and conflicts that they coped with were the themes that permeated the social and curricular experiences and gave meaning to them.

In the reflections chapter, the discrepancy between the rhetoric of gifted education and the lived experience of children in the classroom for the gifted was discussed from the perspectives of the students, the teacher, and the society in general. The implications of the findings were centered on teacher training, teacher selection, and the idea that educational institutions must become more proactive in their support of their talented students in order to encourage them to develop their gifts fully. The desirability of segregating the academically talented from their non-gifted peers was also addressed. Finally suggestions for future research were offered.

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I. THE TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY

It is September and another school day is about to begin for Ms. W's class of grade six gifted students.

* * * * *

The bell rings at 8:55 a.m. to signal the beginning of the school day for the 305 students of Greenfield School in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. As thirty of the students file into Ms. W's grade 6 class for the academically talented, called the actel class, they chat with one another as they hang up their jackets and hurriedly stash their lunches into the pink colored cubicles at the back of the classroom. By 9:00 a.m. the children are settled in their desks and are silently reading a book of their choice. The singing of "O Canada" at precisely 9:15 a.m. requires that Cathy turn on the taped piano accompaniment while she and her classmates stand at attention and half-heartedly sing the words. It is Dana's turn to lead the Lord's Prayer and then to adjust the temperature chart and the calendar for the day. News follows.

> **Krista:** The Soviet-Korean War insurance paid millions of dollars to the Korean airline company.
>
> **Clayton:** The second biggest robbery in history in the U.S.A. was pulled off yesterday. The thieves got away with seven million dollars.

Cory: The Moscow Circus is stuck in Eastern Canada because no one will fly them home.

Anthony: My brother was getting freshied in high school. They put shaving lotion, shampoo and perfume over his head and painted lipstick on his face.

Donna: In the shopping mall, freshies have to wear garbage bags and put flowers in their hair. Then they have to sing, "We are Freshies, we are Freshies!"

Jeremy: At one high school, one guy had to put an egg in his mouth and jump from the lunch table!

Andrew: Three people were killed once during Freshie Week. One was hung by his feet in a locker and was forgotten and he died.

Ms. W (teacher): Is this just a story, Andrew, or is it true?

Andrew: It's true! There was one Freshie who was pushing a bunch of kids in a wheelbarrow up a hill and the wheelbarrow was too heavy for him and rolled back and killed him!

Ms. W: Freshie week can be really dangerous if people don't use their heads. It's 9:30 and time for math. How many people need a review of roman numerals? Those who do, join me at the front while those who don't need it, carry on in your math schedule.

There are fourteen students who go for help moving quickly to the front of the class while the rest of the class remain at their desks to work. After the review, they return to their desks to work.

Ms. W: Time for French in two minutes. Hand in your math for correction, please. And you can have two minutes talk time.

Dawn, Dana, and Karen come to talk to me, the researcher in this classroom of gifted children. Cathy joins us just as Ms. W announces that it is time to line up for French. The children file into the hall in single file and into a nearby classroom. The French teacher is not there yet and some of the children start pushing one another and play fighting. Jason starts slapping his French workbook onto other students' workbooks as in a sword fight. The French teacher enters and the children become quiet as they open their workbooks for corrections. The tape recorder is then used by the teacher to teach oral French for the rest of the period. At 10:30 a.m., French is over and the children are literally running out for recess! At recess, many of the students gather at the tire swings for some intense socializing! Others are in small groups playing games or talking.

After recess, Mr. F teaches band to this class in the band room. As soon as I come into the band room, Giselle tells me excitedly, "We're having a band test today!" After the band members play a few tunes to warm up, they are asked to play their instruments individually. They are trying so hard to pass their test and they just blush and smile when they make a mistake. Mr. F consoles them by saying, "It's so easy to make a mistake so don't worry. You'll do fine next time or the time after."

* * * * *

After band, the children return to their classroom to drop off their instruments and to pick up their lunches.

All but four of the students are from outside the boundaries of Greenfield School and so eat their lunches at school in the gymnasium. A lunch supervisor is hired to supervise the lunch room and is often seen as a disciplinarian by the students.

When asked about lunch hour activities, Shea explains, "We always talk a lot. The lunch supervisor, Mrs. Heavyfoot, comes over and tells us, 'Pipe down, you're too loud today!'" At 12:20 p.m. the children are sent out for some fresh air, and become involved in games such as four square, skipping, wall-ball, and rebound. The gifted children from Ms. W's class usually play together not only because they like one another's company but because some of the children from the non-gifted classes ridicule them and exclude them from their games. As Frank says, "There are some people that, like when they play hockey on the rink, they say 'no actels' or something like that." Todd adds, "If you're in actel, they won't let you play football with them unless you're really, really good at it and you can make a touchdown for sure every game." As for socializing with the regular students, Anthony explains, "Well, some of them don't mind and they'll talk to you but some of them go, 'Oh there's the brain' or something."

* * * * *

The bell rings at 12:55 p.m. to begin the afternoon in the classroom. The morning subjects included current events, spelling, math, French and band. The other subject areas covered in this class are reading, social studies, science, music, health, art, and physical education. The children come in from their lunch break and continue to chat as they go to their desks. The room is noisy as some children visit while others are reading quietly. The attendance topic for today is 'my favorite pizza topping.' As the names are called from the register, each child quickly reports his or her favorite pizza topping. When Cole's name is called, he can't seem to decide what his real favorite is and proceeds to discuss it in some length. The children laugh at Cole's indecision and at the fact that he has altered the quick efficient pace set by Ms. W.

* * * * *

Health is the first subject of the afternoon and Ms. W asks the children to take out their health duo-tangs. Fitness is the topic and Ms. W reads some information regarding fitness and weight control and asks for comments and questions. Lisa asks, "Why are some people unable to lose weight?" Dawn follows this question with another question, "How come my cousin eats twice as much as I do but stays slim while I'm fat?" Cole comments, "I think being fit makes you live longer. My grandmother walks a mile a day and there's no doubt that she'll live for a long time." Jason adds, "My friend is very thin but eats so much. He must have a metabolism that is high." Andrew contributes to the class discussion by adding, "We have a calorie counter at home and it said that bowling burns up eight calories a minute and we thought it would be maybe two calories."

Ms. W writes on the board 'Physical fitness is important because:', and the students contribute the following four points: (1) You look better, (2) You feel better, (3) It can increase your lifespan, and (4) It's fun.

Ms. W asks the students to write down their own definitions of physical fitness. Andrew asks, "Do we have to have four definitions of physical fitness?" Ms. W explains that it should include many of the points that have been discussed. After a few minutes, Ms. W says, "Thumbs up if you're willing to share your definition." As children read their definitions, Ms. W congratulates them by saying, "Excellent! Well put! Well done!"

* * * * *

It is 1:40 p.m. and time for music with Ms. S. The children file into the nearby music room and Sherry, Tanya, and Karen help to set up the music stands with the music books in front of each of the five rows of chairs. Each chair has a ukelele on it. The girls sit with the girls and the boys with the boys. Jason passed gas and Ed pinched his own nose and pointed to Jason so that the girls nearby would not blame him.

The music room has four sets of risers that each have three tiers. There is a music flip chart and two bulletin boards, one of which is covered with bright yellow paper and the other is covered with orange paper. There are beautiful pictures of outdoor scenes along the top of the bulletin boards. The music room is further furnished with blackboards, a piano and an organ, a desk, table and closets. Windows extend along the top of one wall and the sun streams in as the children listen to Ms. S review the parts of the ukelele and the fingering for the chording. Patrick and Jason's names are mentioned more than once by Ms. S who asks for their attention. The children enjoy playing the chords with piano accompaniment provided by Ms. S. "Open your music books, please. You'll notice that the first song is very easy," said Ms. S. Andrew wipes his forehead in mock relief that the song is easy and the class strums the tune. Next, Ms. S puts a Boney M song on the tape recorder as an introduction to what students will play on their ukeleles. Ms. S says, "Feel free to sing along." As she starts singing, many of the students timidly join in. A few of the boys grin shyly at one another wondering if they should sing. Finally, all of the children are caught up in singing the very catchy song and lyrics. The bell rings for recess at 12:20 and Ms. S ignores it and says, "Soft strum and let me hear you sing out." The sounds are beautiful and when the song is finished, Ms. S dismisses them for recess according to how quiet they are. Patrick, Todd, and Jason are dismissed for recess last and only after Ms. S gives them a little lecture about cooperating and helping the teacher out.

* * * * *

The recess bell rings to beckon the children back to their classrooms for the last hour of the school day. Ms. W starts to introduce a newspaper assignment when the fire alarm sounds. Ms. W leads the class in single file out to the schoolyard and proceeds to take attendance from her register. Judy does not say 'here' loudly enough and Ms. W asks her to speak up. Andrew and Jeremy are punching one another while the attendance is being taken and Patrick is climbing on some creative playground equipment. Jeremy is standing apart from the class in stocking feet. Ms. W says angrily, "You are making a spectacle of yourselves! You are all important and don't need to misbehave. Who forgot their shoes Jeremy?" The students laugh. Ms. W asks, "Does that make you proud Jeremy?" Jeremy responds, "No." The return bell rings and they file into the school and are again seated in their desks. Ms. W continues to introduce the newspaper assignment by reading a newspaper story and then asking the students to write a newspaper piece about one important summer event. Andrew says, "All I did was fish, eat, and sleep at Clayton's cabin. Should I just write that? It doesn't sound too interesting." Ms. W replies by saying, "Andrew, it's up to a newspaper writer to make it interesting. You dig to make it sound just a little out of the ordinary."

There is an unsettled feeling in the classroom and Cole continues to turn around to talk to the person behind him. Finally Ms. W asks Cole to sit in his desk facing the back of the class. After five minutes has passed, Ms. W discusses it with him and explains how frustrating it is to have him turning around. He is asked to sit facing the front of the class.

Some children are at their desks while others are working on the floor. Clayton gets up and leaves the room without asking permission. Jason says excitedly to Todd, "Clayton just left the room without asking!" It sounded liked Jason thought Clayton might be risking getting himself into trouble. There is much visiting among students. Sherry tells Lisa and Cathy, "Debbie might go to Germany or get a swimming pool!"

Jason throws a ball of paper into the garbage can. Cole says, "Good Shot!" Jeremy and Shea are working but the rest of the children do not appear to be on task. Finally at 3:15 p.m., Ms. W says, "Please put away your work and take out your journals." Silence reigns as the children write their thoughts and feelings and experiences of the day. Ms. W says, "There are three notes to go home. Make sure that you have a copy of each. You'll leave at 3:30 p.m. if you cooperate. One of the slips asks that you bring an ice cream container from home."

Daryl asks, "What happens if you don't have one?"

Ms. W: "I guess you can't bring one then."

Debbie says, "I can bring an extra!"

Ms. W remarks, "Good for you. That's a girl! You are dismissed."

As the children get their jackets from their cubicles, Joey tells Frank to remember his lunch kit. Patrick is leaving for South America for four months and Todd moans, "Four months! How can we live without Patrick and his bad jokes?" (Journal Notes, Sept. 25, 1983)

* * * * *

This is one school day in the lives of thirty grade six gifted students at Greenfield School. What is life like for gifted children who are in a class for the academically talented? How can a better understanding of their experience help educators to plan more effectively for the education of the gifted? This research is an attempt to answer these questions.

II. INTRODUCTION

> When the sources of our intellectual talent have been determined, it is conceivable that means may be found which would increase the supply. When the physical, mental and character traits of gifted children are better understood, it will be possible to set about their education with better hope of success. . . . In the gifted child, nature has moved far back the usual limits of educability, but the realms thus thrown open to the educator are still terra incognita. It is time to move forward, explore, and consolidate. (Terman, 1925 and 1926, pp. 16-17)

This quote was taken from Terman's writings of 1925 and 1926 but it seems to be especially appropriate for today. The responsibility for the education of the gifted has been assumed by many school systems which attempt to provide programs that have greater scope, depth and pace in order to meet the needs of the gifted. However, the task is most difficult and fraught with confusion because of the dearth of relevant research findings which could guide the decision-making related to gifted education.

A strong theoretical foundation regarding the best way to educate our gifted students does not exist. West (1977) suggests that high powered designs are being used to test inadequately formulated theories. It is impossible to know what factors to test and yet research is prematurely structured without a theory base. Educators understand that there is a need for an educational experience that will optimize the learning potential of the gifted, as with all children, but are at a loss to know how to meet this need. There is disagreement regarding the nature of giftedness, the identification procedures used to identify the gifted, the kinds of differential programming which should occur, and the criteria used for the selection of teachers for the gifted.

Myths regarding giftedness promote the stereotype of the gifted student as self-sufficient, mature, and independent, and needing very little from the educational setting. The myth that gifted students will successfully develop their abilities and become happy, well-adjusted individuals just because they are gifted in one way or another represents an obstruction to recognizing the need for research in the area of the gifted education. Myths may also effectively block informed decision-making regarding programs for the gifted even among educators.

This study was an attempt to investigate what life in the classroom is like for gifted students through the use of a qualitative research approach. It is hoped that the information emerging from the study of gifted children in a classroom setting will shed some light on some of the problems that exist.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The general purpose of the present study was to come to a better understanding of the lived experience of children in the context of classrooms designed for the academically gifted. The focus was on the child culture in this context and an attempt was made to see life through the eyes of the gifted child. The questions which reflected the foreshadowed problems in this study were: (1) What is the meaning to the child of being labelled 'gifted'? (2) What is classroom life like for the gifted child who is surrounded by gifted peers? (3) How does the gifted child experience the learning activities offered in the classroom?, and (4) How does the gifted child view the adult culture?

The significance of this research lies in its potential to improve the quality of education for gifted children, based on an understanding of the child culture in the classroom. This knowledge could greatly enhance the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the gifted students and to plan activities that are both relevant to the students and are educationally sound. The description of the gifted child culture could have a significantly positive impact on the quality and appropriateness of curriculum materials chosen by educators in the schools. It could also act as a guide to curriculum writers in the area of gifted education. Further, this research could make a significant contribution to the knowledge base in gifted education by focusing future qualitative and quantitative research.

III. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Much of the research in gifted education has been done using traditional empirical approaches and has usually been conducted from an adult frame of reference. The focus has been on observing and measuring specific, predetermined variables or behaviors. This review begins by briefly describing Terman's pioneering work relative to characteristics of the gifted. Then various aspects of giftedness and of gifted education such as the nature of giftedness, the personality characteristics of the gifted, the identification of the gifted, and programs for the gifted are discussed. This review of the more traditional empirical research is followed by a discussion of the importance of discovering the culture of the child and the potential usefulness of ethnographic methodology.

RESEARCH IN GIFTED EDUCATION

Terman's impressive longitudinal study of the gifted began in 1921 with the selection of a sample of 1,444 gifted children from metropolitan California schools (Terman, 1925). Selection of the gifted sample was based on teacher nomination of bright students, and this nomination was followed by a group test called the National Intelligence Test Scale 15 Form 1. The top ten percent were then given an abbreviated Stanford-Binet intelligence test. An I.Q. score of 140 or more was the minimum requirement for children under eleven years of age, while an I.Q. of 132 was accepted for inclusion of children fourteen years of age. A group of 26 children who were talented in art, music, or mechanical ability, but who failed to qualify on the basis of I.Q. alone, were also included in the sample. In the five volumes of Genetic Studies of Genius written by Terman and his associates covering the period from 1925 to 1959, the gifted sample was compared to a control group in terms of as many physical, mental and character traits as could be measured at certain time intervals over the years. Khatena (1978) summarized the findings of Terman in the following statement:

> The intellectually gifted as a group came from superior intellectual, physical and environmental backgrounds, and generally maintained this superiority; tended to be many-sided intellectually, emotionally stable, and well adjusted, maintaining these with little incidence of serious problems; had normal marriages and sexual adjustment; showed in general low mortality rate; were normal to superior in social intelligence, interests and play activities; averaged better than most people on nearly every personality trait; were well in advance of their age mates in educational achievement and benefitted by acceleration with almost no occurrence of failure in school subjects; generally obtained A grades; and went to college such that 70 percent became college graduates (a third with academic distinction), 63 percent went to graduate school and 17 percent obtained doctoral degrees. (p. 55)

A follow-up study of subjects scoring above 180 I.Q. in Terman's study indicated that although the subjects had the ability to do academic work with relative ease, the extra I.Q. points did not suggest the presence of "genius" in the ability to achieve transcendent achievement in some field (Feldman, 1984).

Terman's use of the term "genius" when referring to gifted children was further challenged by Hollingworth (1975) who maintained that children who measure below 160 I.Q. rarely are capable of outstanding original intellectual achievement. However, the gifted child as seen by Terman was superior in almost all ways and he felt that to increase the number of children who were labelled intellectually gifted would be possible if the nature of their giftedness could be better understood. The importance of the underlying conception of giftedness is emphasized by Passow (1981) when he states:

> All aspects of identification and nurturance of the gifted and talented depend on the underlying conception of the nature of giftedness and there are a good many operational conceptions extant. Program planners must be sensitive to the crucial importance of clarification of an operational conception of the nature of giftedness and the many issues raised with respect to identification, curriculum differentiation, resource allocation, and development of gifted and talented children and youth. The conception of the nature of giftedness and talent is at the heart of all planning efforts. (p. 7)

Definition of Giftedness

According to the Marland report, the gifted and talented children are those who are capable of high performance in general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, or in the visual and performing arts (Passow, 1981). Three major components of Renzulli's definition of giftedness include above-average ability, task commitment and creativity. He states, "Gifted and talented children are those possessing or capable of developing this composite set of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance" (Renzulli, 1978, p. 261).

Characteristics of the Gifted

What are the characteristics of creatively gifted children which distinguish them from their non-gifted peers? In an article by Davis and Rimm (1977), the gifted were described as high in self confidence and independence and more willing to take creative risks; quite aware of their tendency toward noncomformity and creativeness; high in energy level and spontaneity; preferring complexity and mystery; and having a good sense of humor and a strong interest in the arts. Further traits of this group described by Klein (1982) include the ability to maximize options, defer judgment, be consistent, seek freedom, be action oriented, be aware of inner and outer worlds, and have a positive orientation. The gifted discussed by Jacobs (1971) showed higher productivity, greater interest and motivation, and realized more of a profit from broader experiences.

Needs of the Gifted

The needs of the gifted in the educational setting are seen as fourfold in a review of the literature done by Malone and Moonan (1975). The gifted students need to have: (1) social-emotional support of a group of peers, consisting of intellectual as well as chronological peers; (2) a positive self-concept, which is related to superior achievement; (3) the interaction intellectually with peers to realize their productive potential; and (4) differentiated curricular experiences which adapt to the different learning styles of the gifted.

Effects of Enrichment on Self-Concept

In a study done on the effects of enrichment on self-concept and creative thinking, it was found that an enrichment program based on the Purdue Three-Stage Model could produce significant differences between groups of gifted students randomly assigned to either the program or control group (Kolloff & Feldhusen, 1984). The creative thinking ability of the program group was significantly greater than that of the control group while students in the program maintained their self-concept scores.

Influence of Social Interactions

The kinds of interactions which the gifted have with others strongly influence their achievement of both affective and cognitive goals. Sisk (1982) states:

> What makes us human is the way we interact with people, and much of the interaction of the gifted will be with groups. To the extent that their interactions reflect warmth, concern, helping, kindness and responsiveness, they can become positively involved with others. Through group interactions, gifted students can clarify their own values and attitudes, their moral development, and those of others. (p. 226)

Identification of the Gifted

The purpose of identification of the gifted is to offer them programs that might optimize their learning potential. Identification of the multiple talents of gifted children is a most difficult task but one that is seen as necessary so that we can offer learning experiences that will optimize the development of their potential. Educators are most concerned that the identification procedures will be fair and that students will have the privilege of participating in a program that has been traditionally surrounded by an aura of superiority (Yarborough & Johnson, 1983).

Renzulli (1982) pointed out that giftedness and I.Q. are not the same thing and, furthermore, that the gifted are not a fixed population that can be pre-selected for participation in programs for the gifted. To assume that there is a definite and foolproof method of identifying gifted children by using quantitative measures is ludicrous. Renzulli (1982) states, "Such absolutism in our identification procedure is ironic for a field that prides itself on flexibility of thought and alternative approaches to the solution of problems" (p. 11). In order to be comprehensive, identification techniques must include both quantitative (i.e., traditional measures) and qualitative (i.e., case study information about the student) (Renzulli & Smith, 1977). Treffinger (1982) supports this idea when he says:

> In gifted education, our concern should be to mature beyond a preoccupation with quantitative or statistical data alone, recognizing that the most effective psychoeducational planning may prove to be that which successfully synthesizes the statistical or quantitative evidence with the clinical or qualitative evidence. (p. 21)

Although the use of behavioral procedures for identification of the gifted was common in many programs surveyed, these procedures were used in addition to the I.Q. and achievement scores rather than as a replacement of them (Yarborough & Johnson, 1983). A suggested alternative method for identifying gifted students was assessment of their conceptual level (Post-Kammer, 1982). This qualitative procedure "incorporates pertinent personal characteristics and is likely to more clearly reflect many definitions of giftedness and programming goals for students than traditional measures" (Post-Kammer, 1982, p. 264).

Identifying the creatively gifted presents even more problems. An interesting metaphor is used by Klein (1982) to describe the process of measuring creativity when he says, "It may be that measuring creativity is like trying to catch butterflies with a bear trap—it is a little clumsy and not at all effective" (p. 264).

Even the most comprehensive identification of the gifted methods are plagued by questions such as those posed by Passow (1981):

> Is precocity necessarily a manifestation of giftedness? Is giftedness potential alone or must it be made visible through actual performance? Are "underachievers" indeed gifted or should only achievers be considered gifted? Can an individual be outstanding in some very narrow area, only mediocre or even below average in most other areas, and still be considered gifted? Is creative or productive behavior a component of all giftedness or is it a kind of giftedness in and of itself? Does an individual need to attain affective maturity to match his or her cognitive maturity to be considered gifted? Are there levels of affective maturity—personal, social, emotional maturity—which should be expected before identifying an individual as gifted? (p. 9)

Programs for the Gifted

A good example of the potential influence of a special program was seen when young gifted handicapped children were offered an acceleration program that was individualized according to the children's strengths, weaknesses and handicaps. "Significant gains in areas of talent as well as in self-esteem, task persistence, and creativity" were made (Karnes, Shivedel, & Lewis, 1983, p. 108). Teachers reported that they changed the way that they looked at the children as result of concentrating on the children's strengths instead of their handicaps.

Examples of differentiated curricula are available to teachers of the gifted and it is their task to arrive at an eclectic program which can be adapted to meet the individual needs of the students. The program options discussed by Treffinger (1982) include individualized basic instruction, effective acceleration, appropriate enrichment, and career education with a futuristic orientation. Although both enriching and accelerating instruction is important for the gifted, acceleration gains most support in the research (Feldhusen, 1983). In addition to these program options, Feldhusen (1982) adds experience in creative thinking and problem solving, stimulation of imagery, imagination and spatial abilities, and exposure to a variety of fields of study, art, occupations and professions.

One exciting program that offers selected gifted students an opportunity to explore with professionals in the field is called "The Exploration Scholarship Program" (Lake, 1980). The expeditions cover many scientific research disciplines such as geology, volcanology, marine and terrestrial biology and anthropology. The students travel to the site and are part of the expedition's team for a particular exploration project. The students that have participated in this program report that it was a valuable experience for them in terms of personal growth and a renewed appreciation of life in the United States because of their experience in a foreign culture. Some felt that they had emerged with a new value system enhanced by their field experiences as well as a better understanding of the discipline they were investigating.

With programs that are eclectic in nature, how is it possible to evaluate their effectiveness? Callahan (1983) points out that standardized tests are not appropriate because they measure basic curriculum skills while gifted students have programs that are differentiated in nature. Regression toward the mean where top scores actually go down on the post test is also seen as a disadvantage of using standardized tests for program evaluation purposes. The solution to this program evaluation dilemma is the triangulation of data from independent sources that comment on "those facets of the gifted program which contribute to a desired change in student behavior and which components do not" (Callahan, 1983, p. 7).

One way to evaluate the effectiveness of a particular program is to conduct a follow-up study of the participants involved in the program. In one such study, a questionnaire was administered to forty-nine graduates of a program for the academically gifted from grade 5 to grade 8. The questions addressed the effects on gifted children of being segregated from peers in the regular classroom, and asked for information regarding the students' academic and social leadership history since graduating from grade 8 (Gelmon & MacLean, 1974). The results of the questionnaire suggested that the participants of this program did not feel ill effects as a result of being separated from peers in the regular program. Over fifty percent of those graduates attending post secondary institutions had gained some form of social or academic distinction. They were generally supportive of the program's continuation and expansion because they tended to view it as allowing for educational experimentation and offering greater enrichment (Gelmon & MacLean, 1974).

The teacher of the gifted is charged with a tremendous responsibility in the whole area of programming but such involvement can also be seen as a privilege and a challenge. Renzulli (1982) states:

> The greatest gift of all is the person's desire to create and produce. It is what we as teachers do to help stimulate and fulfill this desire that ultimately will determine if we are really worthy of being called teachers of the gifted. (p. 14)

Attitudes of Parents, Teachers and Students

In a study of student, parent and teacher attitudes toward gifted programs and gifted students at the junior high levels, the gifted students indicated that they did want to participate in a special program with other gifted students (Colangelo & Kelly, 1983). It was further suggested in this study that parents and educators should focus on the peer acceptance among gifted students rather than the possible peer rejection of gifted students by those in the general student body. Parents of both general and gifted students indicated that, if given the chance, they would want their children to participate in a program for the gifted.

A review of the research on parents and families of gifted children indicates that parents of the gifted are generally highly motivated to do their best in the parenting of their gifted youngsters and to contribute to their education (Colangelo & Dettmann, 1983). However, they need information and guidance regarding the best ways in which to facilitate their effectiveness as parents and as educators of their offspring.

Gifted children are more aware of the expectations placed on those labelled gifted and these expectations are not always easy for them to live with. A book entitled The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide is written for gifted adolescents and is a self-help book that begins by explaining what giftedness is, how it is measured and what I.Q. really means. Galbraith (1983), the author, includes hints about how to make school more challenging, how to cope with teasing and how to make new friends. She also addresses the problem of how to get along with parents and to cope with the stress and expectations placed on gifted adolescents. The fact that this book is on the market seems indicative of the growing awareness of the needs of gifted children in our society.

Research Needs

It appears more research must be done to determine the influence of learning styles of children on achievement scores. Resources are available to redesign an ordinary classroom in a short time to respond to the environmental learning styles of its students (Dunn, 1981). She states that ". . . the technology is now available for identifying students' and teachers' styles and then matching them by computer" (p. 34). Based on the learning styles of the gifted and talented, certain counselling strategies have been recommended (Griggs, 1984). Alvino (1981) suggests that a qualitatively different curriculum for the gifted must take learning style differences into account. He states that "learning style preferences should not be viewed as the nonessential frills of a gifted program. They represent the fundamental ways in which students react to their environment and their peers" (p. 40).

Social development and peer relationships of the gifted need to be studied further (Austin & Draper, 1981), and a continued effort must be made to identify and cultivate creative giftedness (Torrance, 1980). Sisk (1980) encourages us as educators to recognize the importance of involving minority members in interacting with minority groups in the identification and development of giftedness. Valuable programs such as Future Problem Solving, Scenario Construction and Sociodrama as a Creative Problem Solving Process should be promoted and adapted for use with all gifted children (Torrance, 1980). According to Torrance, we need to lift the limits on learning by encouraging interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary experiences. Future studies is another exciting and promising area for program development.

The possibilities for gifted education in the future as a result of research are discussed by Barbara Clark (1979). They include research in brain functioning, biofeedback, unification and interconnectedness of feelings emanating from a new awareness of interrelationships among people and cultures, parapsychology and transpersonal education. For now, giftedness refers to a few who are intellectually superior. However, Clark (1979) states:

> When we have integrated our focus, changed and extended our view of reality, and established the underlying connectedness of each to all, we will then have a new meaning of giftedness. The gifted, the talented, the intuned, and the illumined will then be merged. (p. 368)

Progress in Gifted Education and Contemporary Issues

How far have we really come since Terman's time in understanding the nature of giftedness, its identification and the influence of programming alternatives? The answer to this question is, of course, that we have made significant progress but that we still have a long way to go.

Terman's definition of the gifted and talented children revolved around intellectual giftedness, while today we include creative and productive giftedness as part of our definition. In the area of identification, we are attempting to develop a more comprehensive system which includes both quantitative and qualitative information rather than focusing, as did Terman, on an I.Q. score as the basis for identification of the gifted and talented. Programs for the gifted did not exist in Terman's time and now we have many examples of programs developed for those who are gifted academically and creatively. We are also attempting to identify and program for the disadvantaged and culturally different gifted youths.

But we have a long way to go and some of our problems are identical to ones that Terman faced, such as the conflict between elitism and egalitarianism. Gallagher (1979) suggested that society still has a strong love-hate relationship with the gifted. We are proud of their accomplishments but, on the other hand, we are fearful that they will form a new class of elite. In a more recent article, Gallagher (1982) pointed out that the support for "gifted and talented increases as our confidence in our societal position decreases" (p. 180). This idea appears to find support in the educational crises in the United States which is discussed in a report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, a nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform (Bruch, 1984). As Americans experience societal instability, excellence and equality in education are called for in which standards are raised while educators are expected to maintain a sensitivity to individual capabilities (Ambach, 1984). It is felt that the schools are not doing an adequate job of teaching the skills required for analysis and problem solving (Maker & Schiever, 1984). The authors state that the lowering of academic standards may have been for the legitimate purpose of making education more relevant, but it resulted in the "lowering rather than a changing of standards" (p. 7). In order to achieve both excellence and equality, it is suggested that program ideas for the gifted should be used to teach all children (Maker & Schiever, 1984). Gallagher (1980) suggested that the kinds of support needed in gifted education are in the areas of leadership training, inservice training, research and development, and demonstration programs.

The importance of education for the gifted and talented is expressed well by Klein and Lyon (1982) when they state:

> Education for the gifted and talented has the potential to provide the impetus for a transformation in American (or Canadian) education which will produce a sense of achievement in students, provide standards of excellence for all students, encourage individualized instruction, and offer a catalytic example that can make a difference in the education of all children. (p. 291)

The identification, nurturance and education of the gifted has never been more critical to society (Thomason, 1981). But Torrance (1980) offers the final challenge when he states:

> We cannot have a really strong vigorous program for gifted children, until we develop a strong vigorous future image of gifted education. I believe this will happen in the 1980's: this is our challenge and a necessity for our survival. (p. 47)

THE CULTURE OF THE CHILD

Much useful information has been discovered using both the traditional empirical research methodology and the adult culture of reference. However, Spindler (1982) reminds us that children place their own constructions on reality. He states:

> Their behavior is not simply a childish translation of adult norms or patterns of behavior. It is a result of a complex interaction of child culture, adult culture,

> individual striving, and situational culture.
> (Spindler, 1982, p. 312)

In discovering the culture of the child, it is important to understand the interpretive practises of children without subordinating them to our construction of knowing (Silvers, 1975). Silvers refers to children's competencies as "those practises of understanding the world that allow the child to encounter a setting and to explore and organize knowledge of it and of others" (p. 50). The understandings are common to children but are not usually shared by adults. By immersing ourselves in the child culture, "we gain measureless insights into the structures of a lifeworld distinctly different from that of an adult" (Beekman, 1983, p. 44).

An understanding of the child culture is especially important in the educational setting where the culture of the child and that of the teacher may be quite different. Wilcox (1982) explains:

> Not only is the organization and curriculum of the school inappropriate but teachers as cultural beings who have emerged from the culture of reference are likely to be incapable even of communicating to students much less of responding flexibly to their needs. (p. 468)

It is only through the perspectives of children that the culture of childhood in educational settings can be known (Sitton & Mehaffy, 1978). We must see through the eyes of the children to understand their world. The child culture is composed of the ideational "plans-for-action" that are used by children to guide their behavior and to interpret the behavior of other children and adults (Sitton & Mehaffy, 1978). It is the cultural knowledge that children have for "doing" the recess, the bathroom break, the classroom, or any other activity in a school setting. An attempt to discover more about the child culture in the educational setting becomes a necessity if we are to meet the needs of the children. Hanna (1982) states:

> In schools, children's perceptions and experiences of what it is like to be a student may represent a reality that mocks adult ideals and the policies meant to realize them. (p. 347)

Our best educational planning efforts may be misguided if we do not have an understanding of life from the perspective of the child.

In an ethnography of children's spontaneous play, the project of freedom is especially in evidence (Finnan, 1982). Finnan found that "children respond to pressures from the nonplay world in their spontaneous play" (p. 376). Although they know the rules, they also realize that the rules are changing constantly. They can disregard rules when involved in spontaneous play.

There are two questions that need to be addressed in light of the above discussion. First, why has traditional research not focussed on the culture of the child? Second, how can we sensitize ourselves to the culture of the child and learn to see life through the child's eyes?

In an attempt to understand why traditional research has paid little attention to the culture of the child, Sitton and Mehaffy (1978) have offered the following three reasons:

> 1. The developmental model of children tends to desensitize its users to the sociocultural dimension of childhood.
> 2. The role definition of teachers has been that of active and knowledgeable while children have been seen in the role of passive, subordinate, and blank-minded.
> 3. Children have the ability to translate their cultural world into that of adults and so do not share the important cultural information of their child culture. When they try to translate their child culture information in terms of the adult culture, it does not fit or seem to be important enough to share.

Other important reasons for the lack of research in the area of child culture are discussed by Burton (1978) who suggests that because young people are growing cognitively and are changing rapidly in their reasoning ability, it is more difficult to approach the young as informants and to find information that is valid and relatively stable. Problematic also is the fact that an adult talking to a child must ask the right questions and validate responses carefully. Silvers (1975) sums it up when he suggests that previous traditional research studies show children as faulted members of society and as incomplete in intellectual and moral development. They are also seen as "asocial and acultural in their egocentrism, irrational in their ability to reason, and incompetent in possessing knowledge and judgement to carry out tasks as ordinary members of society" (Silvers, 1975, p. 48).

EDUCATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

One way in which we can sensitize ourselves to the child culture and learn to see through the child's eyes is to become familiar with the anthropological methodology called ethnography. Although this methodology will be discussed in greater depth later in this thesis, it is important to know that the ethnographic researcher spends an extended period of time in the naturalistic setting of the group of people to be studied and attempts to become immersed in their culture. The goal is to understand and describe sociocultural activities and patterns from the points of view of the people in that particular culture.

Culture is a central concept of the discipline of anthropology and links the varied interests of its sub-disciplines together. Despite its importance, however, there is little agreement on its precise definition and how it should be used in analysis. Nevertheless, there are two major views of the concept of culture, sometimes referred to as the totalist and mentalist. In the former, culture is seen as the totality of a people's way of life and includes beliefs, knowledge, art, morals, law and custom. The emphasis here is on the behavior, "thoughts and institutions through which such a population secures and maintains itself" (Vivelo, 1978, p. 17) and how these are organized and function. This is the most common view of culture.

A less generally accepted view of culture, the mentalist, holds culture as "a shared system of beliefs and knowledge by which a people order their experiences, perceptions and behavior" (Vivelo, 1978, p. 17). In this perspective the nature and operation of the human mind and its conceptual apparatus are of primary interest. This cognitive approach to culture is intended to reveal conceptual codes or rules for behavior which guide social life. As Geertz (1979) suggests, culture is best seen as a set of control mechanisms for the governing of behavior rather than as concrete behavior patterns. Murphy (1979, p. 24) supports this view when he states, "Culture indeed bestows meaning in and upon our lives, giving us our identities and reducing the chaos of events to order."

While it is usually necessary to describe and analyze a way of life from more than one perspective, the advantage proposed by those who adopt a mentalist or cognitive view of culture is that it provides a way of "getting at" the insider's points of view; or as Malinowski wrote (1922, p. 25) "to grasp the native's point of view."

This study, then, viewed culture as "the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior" (Spradley, 1979, p. 5). It is not that behavior and custom are to be disregarded, but that the emphasis was placed on their meaning to the actors. In this case, the cultural context was a classroom for gifted children where there are social interactions among a group of people whose social relations were regulated by custom (Wilcox, 1982). The goal was to understand life in that classroom through the eyes of the gifted child and was sought using the ethnographic approach to data collection developed by anthropology.

In a review of ethnography as a methodology and its application to the study of schooling, Kathleen Wilcox (1982) described the two major categories of educational ethnography. They are the exploration of the school as an instrument of cultural transmission and the exploration of cultural conflict in the classroom. The conceptualization of schooling as cultural transmission is seen to be in opposition to the view of schools as instruments of reform or change. Some see schools as existing to improve society, not to reproduce it. However, people in communities desire continuity in order to survive in physical terms and in cultural terms (Peshkin, 1982). That which is common or universal about the function of schooling is its communal nature. This communal function of schooling ensures that the children will be enculturated so that they will be able to take their roles as adults in society and continue the culture (Peshkin, 1982).

School ethnographies have focused on both the explicit and the hidden curricula in the classroom as they reflect the wider society. In Wolcott's study of the Kwakiutl village and school, he was the teacher in the school in an Indian village in northern British Columbia (Wolcott, 1967). His values and beliefs represented those of the larger white society and were not shared by the Indian villagers. He found that, although the adults verbally supported his efforts to educate their children in the same manner as white children in larger centers, he was unsuccessful in changing the motivational level and achievement drive of the children. The values of the home and village were most powerful in determining what would be learned at school by the students. Spindler (1982) states that schools as change agents have only a limited influence on children's choice-making activities. Although the children are exposed to the traditional values taught in school, they make their choices regarding lifestyle based on the values of the society with which they identify.

Ethnographic techniques have been effectively employed in examining the process of implementing educational innovations. For example, Odynak (1981) used ethnographic techniques to study the implementation of a new social studies program in a grade one classroom in order to come to a better understanding of the innovation process. She was interested in how the intended curriculum was actually experienced by the students and the teacher when implemented. The insights gleaned from Odynak's rich research experience have the potential to guide further curriculum development in the area of social studies at this grade level.

Classrooms have been studied as arenas of cultural conflict among minority cultures. One such investigation was carried out by Hanna (1982), who, over a period of one year, studied a desegregated elementary school in Dallas, Texas. Hanna (1982) focused on the process called "meddlin" which is an expression of aggression which takes many forms and which both black and white children used in their interactions. It was a source of tension in the school and one that Hanna investigated using the following methods: (1) observing the children; (2) participating in activities and school affairs; (3) constructing interview questions on the basis of her participant observations; and (4) conducting informal interviews. As a result of her study, Hanna (1982) was able to describe the historical and motivational reasons for "meddlin" behavior and thus to make a potentially important contribution to the formulation of just, as well as workable, educational policy.

In a case study in which ethnographic methodology was used, May (1984) found that the explicit and implicit goals of the teacher were discontinuous when presenting an art curriculum to students with an age range of nine to twelve years. May found that the paramount problem for most students in this study "was how to pursue and persist in one's own individual, legitimate aesthetic problem-solving within the constraints of those problems presented and superimposed by the teacher" (p. 42). She suggested that we should strive to understand the meaningfulness of the curriculum to children and then to use this understanding to determine with the student, the most appropriate curricular experiences. She concluded by posing the question, ". . . do we improve our hearing of students only to find a more prescriptive way to impose our objectives, or might student views merit some autonomy and legitimacy" (p. 44).

Research done by Whitney (1983) into the social reality in a grade four class, explored the congruency between the students' social reality and the social studies curriculum. He found that the students could be involved in social studies while continuing to carry on their own social interactions. Their time was filled with 'play' which included "actual playing; thinking about playing; playing games; indulging in make-believe; reading about make-believe; and watching make-believe on the T.V. or movies" (Whitney, 1983, p. 185). Based on his findings, Whitney recommended that educators be aware of the following points:

> 1. The media, and television in particular, provide a curriculum that does compete with the curriculum in school;

2. Many students at this age have difficulty generalizing and applying generalizations;
3. Students must be given time to do their own growing up because at this age, the issues in the social studies curriculum are not as relevant to the students as they are to adults; and
4. Because fantasy and make-believe will enter into the social studies curriculum regardless of the plan, it should be accepted and usefully employed.

Differential socialization in the classroom and the implications for equal opportunity were studied using a controlled comparison in two neighborhoods with different socioeconomic status (Wilcox, 1982). This study used an ethnographic methodology which included the use of statistics. In both schools, one in an upper-middle class neighborhood and one in a lower-middle class neighborhood, the focus was on the dimensions of teacher behavior in the classroom; the external versus internal direction; anticipation of the future particularly with respect to the work role; and fostering skills in self-presentation. The self-fulfilling prophecies that work to socialize children for a hierarchy of work roles was seen to operate in these two schools. In the upper-middle class school, children were expected to internalize direction that would be appropriate for white collar jobs, to anticipate professional and prestigious careers, and to learn to present themselves well. Wilcox (1982) suggested that "the measure most likely to be effective in removing this self-fulfilling prophecy is not a program to be instituted in the classroom, but one to be instituted in the wider society" (p. 303). This could be started by a destratification of the workplace and by recognizing the value and importance of all jobs.

Closely Observed Children is a diary of a primary classroom in which the researcher became actively involved as a teacher helper in order to study the intellectual growth and achievement of eight and nine year old children (Armstrong, 1980). This study departs from the usual educational ethnography format because the purpose was not to study classroom life but to explore how children learned in a classroom environment "as they sought to make sense of the world and to reflect upon their own experience of it" (Armstrong, 1980, p. 1). There is excellent "thick-description" as the author describes the sustained intellectual activity and practise of individual children in the different subject areas over the school year.

Participant observation research on the social construction of everyday classroom order sheds some light on the "establishment and maintenance of teacher-defined interactional order and the imposition of teachers' definitions of order on classroom verbal and non-verbal behavior" (West, 1975, p. 36). When a teacher is confronted with the responsibility of encouraging the social and academic progress of thirty children, he or she will probably resort to the standard roles and methods of control. West (1975) stated that "although pupils may not be consulted, their compliance with the constitution and obedience to the teachers' authority implicates them in a joint construction of the social world of the classroom" (p. 39). Classroom trouble-makers are legitimate and necessary members of a class because they serve to symbolize what students should not do. Evaluation of pupils' academic progress is greatly influenced by the interpersonal authority relations with the teacher. West (1975) concluded by recommending the topics of order, authority, and deviance in the classroom as potentially fruitful for qualitative investigation.

Other ethnographic studies in education have focused on evaluation of children, teacher-student communication behavior, differences between home and school cultures, evaluation of the change process, the interface between parents, school staff and administrators, and the leadership of administrators in the change process (Wilcox, 1982).

In the review of the literature in gifted education and the discussion regarding the importance of discovering the culture of the child through the use of ethnographic methodology, an attempt was made to support the usefulness of qualitative research methodologies in the study of gifted children. The qualitative research methodology used in this study is now discussed in greater depth.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research to be described was done in the form of a case study using ethnographic methodology. Although the terms case study and ethnography are often used interchangeably by anthropologists, Wolcott (1975) states that a case study is a more unassuming label, "while the term ethnography suggests both a more comprehensive and detailed report and the perhaps unattainable ideal of a complete and perfect account" (p. 23).

The major parameters of this qualitative approach to research will be discussed under the following headings: (1) the definition and expectations of ethnography; (2) the inquiry process; (3) appropriateness of using one method; and (4) considerations in writing the final account. The advantages and limitations of qualitative research will be addressed followed by a discussion of the role of the researcher and the interpretation of the social encounter.

THE DEFINITION AND EXPECTATIONS OF ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is the fieldwork methodology used by anthropologists to describe a culture (Vivelo, 1978). "Ethnography encompasses any study of a group of people for the purpose of describing their socio-cultural activities and patterns" (Werner & Rothe, 1979, p. 1). Ethnography "is a naturalistic, observational, descriptive, contextual, open-ended, and in-depth approach to doing research" (Wilcox, 1982, p. 461). The purpose of ethnography "is to combine the view of an insider with that of an outsider to describe a social setting" (Wilcox, 1982, p. 461). Wilcox (1982) completes the definition of ethnography when she states:

> The resulting description is expected to be deeper and fuller than that of the ordinary outsider and broader and less culture-bound than that of the ordinary insider. (p. 461)

Ethnography is the fieldwork methodology used by educational anthropologists and is characteristically comparative and holistic. A holistic account of schooling deals with "the interrelation between schooling and other social institutions and how such interrelationships may affect classroom processes" (Ogbu, 1981, p. 13). Vivelo (1978) states that comparability is necessary to identify similarities and differences among cultures in order to arrive at generalities. He describes holism as the anthropologist's attempt to cover the whole scope of what humankind is and to present a total or composite view. Human culture is seen as an interconnected functional whole. He feels that the search for the normative character of human nature may focus on the particular only as a way to gather data which can be organized in terms of theory which is generalizable. The generalizability of ethnographic studies that are done in an accurate and in-depth manner is as good or better than in those studies that use research designs that are not contextually embedded (Spindler, 1982). The concept of generalizability in qualitative research is one which will be discussed later in this thesis.

What is expected of an ethnography? Marcus (1980) states:

> . . . readers expect an ethnography to give a sense of the conditions of fieldwork; of everyday life (Malinowski's "imponderabilia"); of micro-process (an implicit validation of participant observation); of holism (a form of portraiture integrated with the pursuit of particular claims); and of translation across cultural and linguistic boundaries (the broad, cultural exegesis of indigenous terms and concepts). (p. 509)

This is a very difficult, if not impossible, expectation to meet but one that represents the ideal or standard in ethnographic research. Wolcott (1982) states that an overriding concern for culture, for context and for comparison ought to be evident in every genuine piece of educational ethnography" (p. 89). Because there is no standard way in which ethnographers accomplish the task in their research, fieldworkers need to have a flexibility of perspective when observing the culture being studied (Sanday, 1979). In addition to a preparedness to observe the situation over a period of time, Lutz and Ramsey (1974) discuss the need for a theory base in ethnography called "grounded theory." They state, "But without working hypotheses and theory, data gathering is aimless and random. Focus is as necessary as an open mind, and some delimitation is as important as scope" (p. 6). Grounded theory is defined as simply "the discovery of theory from data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1). It is most important because it "provides us with relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and applications (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1).

Fresh insights are made possible by theory grounded in the data as opposed to the use of conventional ideas. Varenne (1982) studied cliques in a high school, and rather than focusing on the conventional ideas of social organization in terms of dress and casual groupings, he looked at cliques in terms of what students say about each other. He studied "the symbols particularly in self-other references using personal pronouns" (p. 213). The use of his theoretical model allowed him to discover a very different reality regarding cliques, in which he found the social organization of cliques to be fluid and ambiguous. Because each research situation is unique, no predetermined or standardized methodology can be recommended for use and found to be appropriate across many different research studies. Wilcox (1982) supports this view when she states:

> Traditionally, from the ethnographer's point of view, the gathering of many different kinds of data has been seen to increase the uniqueness of each setting and each area of study has been

> thought to require a tailor-made set of methods and techniques. (p. 460)

The areas of study within the ethnographic paradigm are internally differentiated depending upon the focus, which can be holistic, semiotic or behavioristic, and the degree to which the goal is that of description, explanation, or diagnosis (Sanday, 1979).

ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY

How does a researcher initiate an ethnographic study. Wilcox (1982) makes a number of suggestions. The researcher must set aside all preconceptions about the participants and the setting of the study. This may be difficult for educational researchers who are familiar with the school setting in which their research is to be conducted. They must learn to make the familiar strange and to question as though the situation was extraordinary. Phenomena for observation are selected by the researcher and are translated in terms of a 'foreshadowed problem'. However, because the particular problem can only be understood in the context of the setting, this foreshadowed problem is only a starting point and is redefined and adjusted as questions and problems emerge during the research process.

In most cases, the researcher begins the fieldwork without predetermined categories, hypotheses and questionnaires in order to remain open and sensitive to the unpredictable and valuable emerging data and questions. Spindler (1982) suggests that any "instruments, when used, should be emically relevant, oriented to the views and cultural knowledge of the natives" (p. 43). Freilich (1970) refers to this initial focusing period as the adaptation or passive research period which is followed by the data gathering period.

The inquiry process used by ethnographers relies on the assistance of informants who are members of the culture being studied and who literally teach the ethnographer about the culture from the informant's or actor's point of view (Spindler, 1982). It is very important for the ethnographer to treat the informants with respect and to develop a trust and rapport with them. Beekman (1983) states that "part of our participation in the lifeworld of our informants involves intimate, detailed observations that constitute "thick description" narratives which are both systematic and reflexive" (p. 38). Researchers must be respectful of the informants' competence and value them as human beings.

The researcher becomes immersed in the culture usually in the role of a participant observer. Participant observation is described by Freilich (1970) as "observing the behavior of a group while participating in its community life" (p. 1). Agar suggests the use of the informal interview as the primary source of data in the early stages of the fieldwork with observation playing the supplemental role (Agar, 1980). However, he states that interviews and observations interact with each other enhancing our ability to give accounts of events. The fine line that researchers must remain aware of is that line which separates the role of researcher and that of full participant in a community to the point of going native (Geertz, 1974). Geertz (1974) reports that the famous anthropologist, Malinowski, was of the opinion that you do not have to be a native to understand one. The time spent in the field should allow the regularities and irregularities to become obvious to the researcher so that the data can be interpreted with confidence (Wilcox, 1982).

Techniques for gathering data can include longhand descriptions, structured observation instruments, videotape, cameras, audiotape, interviews and existing sources of data, such as diaries or documents. Freilich (1970) suggests that flexibility in fieldwork is facilitated if the researcher has developed a number of different techniques for gathering, storing, retrieving and analyzing data. However, after a discussion of data gathering techniques, Fisher (1975) concluded that open-ended observation is the most useful method in arriving at an understanding of the educational experience in the classroom. His conclusion is supported by West (1977) when he states:

> Participant observers have discussed at length the implications of human intentionality for concept formation and data collection. As well,

> the flexibility of the technique and its observational emphasis exemplify the approaches needed for classroom knowledge. (p. 59)

APPROPRIATENESS OF USING ONE METHOD

Although many authors have discussed ethnographic techniques (Strauss, 1969; McCall-Simmons, 1969; Zelditch, 1969) the anthropologist who makes a brave attempt to demystify fieldwork is Spradley (1979). He describes the steps involved in ethnographic research and includes examples of three types of questioning: (a) descriptive questions; (b) structural questions; and (c) contrast questions. Instructions for carrying out a domain analysis on collected data are followed by guidelines for both a taxanomic analysis and a componential analysis.

Spradley introduces the area of cultural anthropology in a comprehensive and clear manner along with the terminology and provides some good advice and interesting examples of ethnographies done by his students. However, there are some serious reservations about recommending the exclusive use of Spradley's method to ethnographic researchers for the sake of methodological explicitness. Honigmann (1976) cautions:

> The high degree of explicitness being sought can only be secured by truncating research problems, narrowing the range of data (e.g., relying on words rather than actions), putting guardrails to confine imagination, and abandoning a portion of the human potential for discovery. (p. 244)

If Spradley's (1970) focus is on language and on the meaning of words as a way to understand then there may be the danger that this simplistic focus on words will blind the researcher to rich data that is non-verbal. The method seems to assume that tacit knowledge can be made explicit by the use of a questioning technique. There is always a danger that the early analysis of data and the organization of the data into literal-based domains will result in premature closure of the foreshadowed problem so as to make redefinition and readjustment difficult and highly unlikely.

The choice of methods and techniques used for the collection of data in the field should be flexible and appropriate to the particular situation. Implicit in Spradley's method is the assumption that it will be an appropriate method for use in all research situations. However, there seems to be a superficiality in his method which seems to deny the depth that exists in human experience.

A final comment on the use of Spradley's method of data analysis has to do with the influence of the chosen method on the written ethnography and the degree to which the reader experiences the situation (Spradley, 1979). The strength of qualitative research is in its description of the situation in a way that can be understood by multiple audiences. The strength of Spradley's method is the extent to which the creation of domains, the structuring of questions and the jargonizing of the process increases the probability that the reader will better understand the culture being described. Kemmis (1980) adds a caution regarding the use of research techniques that may narrow the focus in the study of man in the socio-cultural context of life. He states:

> . . . our scientific understandings of social life have all too frequently fragmented into "manageable" bits which conceal from us the context-embeddedness of social phenomena, their dynamic coherence, their reflexive efforts and their true significance which is in action rather than theoretical discourse. (p. 135)

CONSIDERATIONS IN WRITING THE FINAL ACCOUNT

Choosing the reporting method for a case study that used ethnographic methods is of major importance because it influences the degree to which the audience experiences the situation (Adelman, Jenkins, & Kemmis, 1980). Some of the possible reporting methods include collage, film, role-play, oral feedback, quasi-journalistic and written reports. Because ethnographic research attempts to describe a culture at one point in time, using the present tense gives a timeless quality to the report (Spradley, 1979). The use of this 'ethnographic present' represents an attempt to catch the ongoing processes in a culture (Wolcott, 1975). Whether the goal of the study is description, explanation or diagnosis determines the direction of the reporting format

(Sanday, 1979).

Because ethnographic accounts should reflect the complexity of a culture and offer thick description, they should not in Geertz's opinion, present a tightness that leads to an assurance that it is true (Geertz, 1973). He feels that "nothing has done more . . . to discredit cultural analysis than the construction of impeccable depictions of formal order in whose actual existence nobody can quite believe" (Geertz, 1973, p. 18).

The way in which the final report is used is beyond the control of the researcher once the report has been made public. Spindler (1984) reports that most anthropologists feel that ethnographies should report on different aspects of schooling but should not recommend specific policy decisions. However, once the report is made public, it may be used by interested parties to inform policy decisions in ways unimagined by the researcher. Although ethnographic methodology is also used for purposes of educational evaluation, Wolcott (1982) continues to support traditional ethnographic research which has as its goals those of the description and interpretation of culture.

Ethical considerations regarding the rights of informants must be of high priority in this kind of research (Graef, 1980). The informants must agree to participate in the study and must be assured of confidentiality regarding information which they would prefer not to be used in the report. Another important ethical consideration concerns the issue of reciprocity, which demands that the researcher make some decisions about contributing something to the informants and their culture in return for their cooperation and assistance during the gathering of data. Glazer (1972) poses questions revolving around the responsibility of the researcher to contribute to the culture under study rather than to merely be tolerated by the people, the right of the informants to know the values of the researcher, and the opportunity given to the informants to evaluate the researcher.

Once the report is written, Glaser and Strauss (1970) maintain that the researcher and his readers share a joint responsibility in the understanding of the report. The researcher must attempt to make the report as explicit as possible, while the reader has the task of making adjustments in the applications of the report to his or her unique situation. Kemmis (1980) suggests that the sharing of the experience may be sufficient to allow the reader to make his or her own evaluation of it. He states, "Despite its ambiguities, its imperfections and its simplifying interpretations, the case study can create conceptual stabilities which are platforms for understanding and action" (Kemmis, 1980, p. 131).

THE ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In a sense, research can be regarded as a search for truth, but as Wilby (1980) states, ". . . if truth can be achieved—the subject is too small and insignificant to be interesting; if the subject is interesting, it is too large and complex for the 'truth' to be established" (p. 215). This search for truth must extend to all areas of human endeavor if understanding of the human condition in its full complexity is to be attained. But how to arrive at this truth is the problem. Stake (1978) states:

> Truth in the fields of human affairs is better approximated by statements that are rich with the sense of human encounter: To speak not of underlying attributes, objective observables, and universal forces, but of perceptions and understanding that come from immersion in an holistic regard for phenomena. (p. 6)

The shift from positivist research techniques to qualitative methods as seen by Shapiro (1983) is due to the "cultural change and the conflict and dissolution of values [that] mark the contemporary scene" (p. 133). The universe is no longer considered to be rationally and predictably oriented. It is the disintegration of the social reality that is part of our lives that is the key concern underlying the new research. The movement towards the use of qualitative methodologies in educational research must be seen as part of a larger movement that is critical of the political and epistemological dominance of positivism in our society—a domination that for many people "represents an inadequate framework within which to understand our own existence and on which to make socially significant judgements" (Shapiro, 1983, p. 138).

Advantages of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research attempts to study the phenomena in a holistic manner and has many strengths. The advantages of qualitative research methodologies are discussed by Willis (1981): First, they provide insight into particular situations rather than generalizations regarding many cases. Second, these approaches permit the investigation of the dynamics of the situation, thus providing more opportunity for the researcher to be sensitive to the changing processes of the particular case. Third, the information gathered by means of these approaches is presented in ways that can be "especially vivid, personal, and understandable" (Willis, 1981, p. 191). Fourth, some of the naturalistic skills required by the researcher using these approaches can be taught through proper training. Fifth, these approaches encourage the broadening of the interpretation of the data and the deepening of the significance of the information.

A better understanding of human behavior can be gained through the use of qualitative approaches. West (1977) states, "Qualitative methods allow one to understand how conceptions held by people shape their behavior, at least in part, and how such conceptions and behavior change over time" (p. 61). Because human behavior is rarely context-free, the "knowledge of human behavior, individually or in social groups, is necessarily idiographic, and the differences are at least as important as similarities to an understanding of what is happening" (Guba, 1981, p. 78).

Validity, Reliability and Objectivity

However helpful qualitative approaches are, they do have some limitations that must be considered. The discussion of limits usually takes the form of a comparison between qualitative and quantitative research methods, with reference to factors such as validity, reliability and objectivity as they affect the generalizability of the findings.

The internal validity of qualitative research is usually strong because the researcher can return to the field to validate data and can use techniques such as triangulation, in which a number of indicators from a variety of data collection techniques validate the information (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Participant observation allows researchers to check description against fact which makes it possible to become aware of the difference between how informants describe their culture and observations of the culture made by the researcher (Becker & Geer, 1972). West (1977) states:

> Participant observation techniques explicitly offer the opportunity for the development of more valid concepts and theories by placing the principal investigator close to the phenomena where indicators may be refined over time. (p. 62)

The data can be further validated by one who is a native of the culture.

How can the data be valid if the researcher is not objective and if the biases of the investigator are not taken into account? Blumer (1972) suggests that it is impossible to catch the interpretive process by remaining aloof as an objective observer. He feels that to resist taking the role of a participant, or acting unit, is risking the worst kind of subjectivism in which the objective observer fills the process of interpretation with his own ideas about what happened rather than catching the process as it occurs in the actual situation from the point of view of the participants. However, choosing from plausible alternatives in interpreting qualitative data is guided by the researcher's purposes (Donmoyer, 1984). He states that "qualitative researchers' talk of findings emerging from the data is no more defensible than the naive empiricism of quantitative researchers" (Donmoyer, 1984, p. 28).

Reliability, or replicability, is impossible in the study of human behavior but the generation, refinement, and validation of constructs may not require replication of situations (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). From the perspective of qualitative research, the issue of reliability is described well by Honigmann (1976) when he states:

> The personal approach rests of the premise that, under certain circumstances, value lies in the very uniqueness and nonrepeatability of a particular investigator's version of reported events or in conclusions drawn from those events. The circumstances under which such value is apt to be present include the investigator's being properly qualified for the task, having something fresh or interesting to say about a significant topic, and having the integrity to say only what he or she believes to be true. (p. 244)

Generalizability

Generalizability is one of the important goals of qualitative research and is realized in the themes and patterns which emerge from the fieldwork data. Wolcott (1975) states that it is the job of the ethnographer to look for connections between little and big problems and to organize the final report in a way that shows "some comparability between the problem immediately at hand and the recurring themes among problems shared by humans in all times and places" (p. 41). Suransky's comment regarding generalizability is illuminative and comprehensive when she states:

> When the description and reconstruction of experiential data have taken place, a critical and reflexive dialectical analysis is made, the search for themes in the internal structure leading to a search for themes in the external structure, so that small-scale microscopic, situation analysis forms the bridge to the megaworld beyond. (Suransky, 1982, p. 38)

Some qualitative researchers are more interested in arriving at "universal statements of general social processes rather than statements of commonality between similar settings such as classrooms" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 41). The generalizability of information rests ultimately on the assumption of intersubjectivity of interpretations and the reader's ability to generalize the information in a personal way to their own situations (McCutcheon, 1981).

The criteria used to evaluate the information adequacy and interpretations of the written account should include the following: (1) it has a line of sound reasoning; (2) it has sufficient evidence to support interpretations; (3) interpretation is in agreement with what is already known about the culture; and (4) the interpretation promotes significant understanding (McCutcheon, 1981).

RESEARCHER ROLE

The role of the researcher is a demanding and exciting one in ethnographic research. Suransky (1982) describes the research process when she says:

> One does not understand the structures of reality without transforming them through the mediation of a critical reflexivity on the part of the researcher, who is also transformed in this process. (p. 38)

What are some of the characteristics that an ethnographer should have? Wolcott (1975) lists the credentials that an ethnographer should have that includes: (1) a thorough grounding in cultural anthropology; (2) physical stamina; (3) emotional stability; (4) personal flexibility; (5) ability to be a sensitive and perceptive observer; and (6) inordinate amount of curiosity. To complete the profile, Wolcott (1975) also suggests that the ethnographer should be a story teller. Kemmis (1980) refers to the researcher as the "theory of instruments" because he sees the researcher as a particular kind of research instrument. The importance of the human scientist as a person with a unique biographical background is acknowledged by the institutionalization of self-conscious ethnography (Nash & Wintrop, 1972). This self-conscious ethnographic style is one in which the anthropologist as observer is "continually taken into account in methodological considerations and in the evaluation of field observation" (p. 532). One of the reasons that the ethnography of schooling has fallen short in the past is that, "we give in to our rage too self-indulgently and present schools, teachers, and students as essentially and irredeemably inhuman" (Erickson, 1984, p. 61). Rather than reacting to the situation in a judgemental or evaluative manner, it is necessary for the researcher to use "disciplined subjectivity" in order to describe and interpret the culture (Erickson, 1984).

INTERPRETATION OF SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

The individual's framework for interpreting social interaction determines the focus for the collection and analysis of data. Following is a comparison of Thomas Wilson's normative paradigm and social interpretation paradigm. This comparison is an attempt to expose the assumptions implicit in commonly proposed research methods (Wilson, 1970). The role of the researcher as a human scientist will be examined in light of Wilson's two different conceptions of social interaction and from the perspective of different authors.

From the perspective of the normative paradigm, as described by Wilson (1970), the particular actor has certain role-expectations, and the term "status" refers to "the organized set of role expectations applying to a particular actor" (p. 698). Role-expectations and statuses govern the interaction between actors who are assumed to share a system of symbols and their meanings. In this normative paradigm, the individual actor is seen as behaving in a definite manner in a certain situation. Wilson (1970) states, "The relevant features of the observed interaction can be deduced from these expectations and dispositions along with the assumptions embodied in the model of the actor" (p. 699).

Goffman's framework of social interaction typifies the conceptions foundational to the normative paradigm (Goffman, 1959). He describes the social establishment as being encompassed by barriers to perception in which a certain kind of activity routinely takes place. Within the barriers of the social institution, there is a team of performers that cooperates to present the audience with a given definition of the situation. Impression management is most important and is carefully planned in the "back region," so that it can be performed for the audience in the "front region." Solidarity among team members is vital and must be sustained in the face of a number of potential disruptions. Role-expectations and statuses rule behavior both in Goffman's framework of social interaction and in Wilson's normative paradigm. That social interaction is governed by role-expectations lends a sense of stability and predictability to human behavior. Not only can a method of data collection and analysis be applied to a stable phenomenon, but the researcher can presumably verify the data at any time by re-entering the field of predictable phenomena.

In an article by Stephen Wilson (1977), the naturalistic-ecological perspective appears to parallel the assumptions represented by the normative paradigm. This perspective suggests that societal settings themselves are responsible for the generating of predictable behavior. Based on this assumed stability, the procedures for research include: (1) deriving explicit a priori hypotheses; (2) developing methods of data gathering; and (3) conducting appropriate statistical analyses. This method resembles that espoused by the traditional empirical research model which is concerned with deductive explanation. An example of the deductive approach is presented in the book entitled The Feral Classroom: High School Students' Construction of Reality (Macpherson, 1983). The researcher used Parsonian theory "to construct models of schooling, socio-sexual roles, the peer groups and controls" (Macpherson, 1983, p. 3). Macpherson (1983) states that to describe students' classroom interaction is the empirical aim while "the theoretical aims are to illustrate the operation of normative and control aspects of Parsons' theory and to develop his model of schooling" (p. 6). The students' construction of reality may have difficulty emerging in this study when one realizes that the analysis of data would be done according to an imposed theoretical stance chosen by the researcher.

A more inductive approach, called the cultural ecological model, is based on the researcher's acknowledgement of the importance of the interrelationships between formal education and other sociocultural institutions (Ogbu, 1981). He states that "each area of investigation contributes to our understanding of the problem, but each makes more sense in terms of explanatory power and policy questions when studied in combination as suggested within an ecological framework" (Ogbu, 1981, p. 23).

In Thomas Wilson's discussion of the interpretive paradigm, he points out that there is an incompatibility between the characteristics of interpretive description and the logic of deductive explanation (Wilson, 1970). In the interpretive paradigm, role-taking refers to the process in which an actor bases his own course of action on the perception of another's behavior, which is seen as meaningful action which expresses some purpose. Over the course of interaction, meanings change and evolve. Documentary interpretation and indexicality are described by Wilson (1970) as foundational to the flexible and adaptive understanding of new information in the interpretive paradigm. He states:

> . . . in contrast with the normative paradigm, definitions of situations and actions are not explicitly or implicitly assumed to be settled once and for all by literal application of a pre-existing culturally established system of symbols. (p. 701)

All interpretations of meaning in one situation are subject to reformulation on subsequent occasions.

The implicit assumptions held by Wilson (1970) concerning the human nature of individual actors are made more explicit by Schutz (1973). For example, the idea that social interaction challenges the individual actors to come to terms with one another as well as with themselves portrays individuals as constantly changing, growing, and adapting in the common sense world. The uniqueness of each actor is founded upon the uniqueness of the person's biographical situation. It could be stated that there are as many perspectives on reality as there are individual actors. To further explain the multitude of roles which each actor plays in the common sense world, Schutz discusses the concept of fragmentation, which refers to the fact that at any particular time, only a fragment of one's being or social self is present.

The concept of symbolic interaction is basic to the understanding of the interpretive paradigm. Blumer (1972) describes symbolic interaction as that which takes place between human beings and is peculiar in the sense that individuals interpret or define each others actions rather than merely reacting to each other's actions. Symbolic interaction is further clarified when Blumer (1972) states:

> The individual is desegregating different objects to himself, giving them meaning, judging their suitability to his action and making decisions on the basis of the judgment. This is what is meant by interpretation or acting on the basis of symbols. (p. 147)

The use of symbolic interaction in a general theory of cultural transmission as described by Gearing (1984) includes the two notions of equivalence and transaction which "are purely interpsychic in nature" (p. 29). The idea of equivalence suggests that the two people in an encounter bring to that encounter their cognitively mapped prior experience and they reveal various degrees of commonality or fit. The mappings and their fit usually change during an encounter or a series of encounters. "Transaction focuses attention on the forms of communication, the kind of cognitive change and the direction of that change" (Gearing, 1984, p. 31). If cultural patterns of an encounter could be predicted based on an understanding of the equivalences and transactions, a theory of cultural transmission would be conceivable that would tell us how cultural systems endure and change.

If the researcher identifies with the perspective of the interactionist, then the following principles discussed by Denzin (1972) will be important to consider when doing the research:

1. An investigation is complete only when the symbols and interactions are combined.
2. When the investigator takes the perspective of the acting other and views the world from his informant's viewpoint, he must maintain the distinction between scientific and everyday conceptions of reality.
3. A link must be made between the subjects' symbols and definitions and the social relationships that provide these conceptions.
4. The researcher must record the behavior settings of interaction and scientific observation.
5. Research methods must be able to reflect the change process as well as the static behavioral forms.
6. Research in the social sciences is best viewed as an act of symbolic interaction. The personal preferences of the investigator shape his activity as a researcher. Through the research methods, he acts on his environment.
7. The proper use of concepts becomes sensitizing and not operational; the causal proposition becomes interactional and universal in application.

The researcher in this study will interpret the social encounter from a conceptual base which lies somewhere between the normative and the social interpretation paradigms. The perspective of the normative paradigm is necessary in order to provide a sense of stability and predictability in the everyday world so that the usefulness of the data collected can be thought to extend beyond the present. However, as much as the normative paradigm is necessary and useful in lending a sense of stability, the social interpretation paradigm based on the concept of symbolic interaction was the major paradigm which this researcher adopted in doing fieldwork that was sensitive to the dynamics of human interaction.

V. THE RESEARCH SETTING

SYSTEM ENTRY

In the months before officially applying for permission to do my research, I discussed my proposed study with Mrs. D. Trischuk, the consultant for the gifted with the school board to which I would make application. Because there are only two schools in the city that offer the program for the academically talent, called the actel program, it was most helpful to have the consultant for the gifted approach the two principals on my behalf. I made a formal application in May of 1983 to the Superintendent of Planning, Development, and Research with the school board. He approved my application on the conditions that (1) the consultant for the gifted also approved it, and (2) that I would be responsible for finding a teacher in the actel program at the grade five or six level who would welcome me as a researcher into the classroom. Both conditions were met and the only compromise that was necessary was that I would have to do my research in a grade six actel classroom rather than in a grade five room, which had been my first choice.

The fact that I would be doing my study in a grade six classroom had both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages stemmed from the fact that, because the children had been together for one year in grade five, they were better able to articulate the class concept that had developed, to describe how social groups had formed, and to explain how they had experience the actel program to date. The main disadvantage was that I was unable to observe the adjustment to life in the classroom for gifted children from day one in grade five.

SCHOOL ENTRY

The first staff meeting of the new school year was held at Greenfield School on Thursday, August 31, 1983. Because I knew the Principal and some of the staff members, I was warmly greeted and felt quite at home. The principal introduced me at the first staff meeting and asked me to briefly describe my proposed research. I did so and thanked both the principal and Ms. W, the grade six actel teacher, for allowing me to conduct my research at the school. Following my comments, I surprised the staff by suggesting that I had often thought that it would be wonderful to go home after putting in thirty minutes on the first day back to work and that's what I intended to do. With a wave, I made my exit!

The children were to begin school on Tuesday, September 5, 1983 and Ms. W and I decided that Thursday, September 7, 1983 would be a good time for me to make my first appearance. The initial plan was for me to be in the classroom for a minimum of four half days a week from September 7, 1983 to December 22, 1984. The time spent in the classroom was soon extended to an average of five half days a week and the end of January, 1984 became the time for the completion of my observation period. When I asked Ms. W if I could return in January 1984 to complete by interviews and observations, she gave me permission to do so. She facilitated my research by informing me of anything that had occurred when I was not there that she thought might be of interest to me.

SCHOOL SETTING

Greenfield School was built twenty four years ago and is located in an upper middle class neighborhood. It is a one-storey building and has approximately sixteen rooms, a gymnasium, and a library. Although there are three-hundred and five children registered this year, the enrolments are declining. As with all schools in this Saskatchewan city, elementary grades include kindergarten to grade eight with grade nine being the beginning of high school. The grades five to eight actel or gifted students account for 120 students of the 305 at Greenfield School.

In the community, the number of rented multiple dwellings is small but significant in that twenty five percent of the school population is drawn from these units. There is strong parent involvement in the school but it comes mostly from the parents of the gifted.

There are fourteen teachers on staff—three men in Division Three and eleven women who teach grades in Divisions One, Two, and Three. Division One includes kindergarten to grade three, while Division Two includes grades four to six and Division Three, grades seven and eight.

A VISIT WITH THE PRINCIPAL

I had many questions about the operation of the actel program. For example, how are the teachers for the gifted chosen? Is there a recommended curriculum for the academically talented students? What is the purpose of the program for the gifted? Following is an interview with the Principal.

Interviewer: How are teachers for the gifted chosen?

Principal: Principals have quite a lot of say in the matter. Superintendents and Principals suggest teachers who they think are especially good. The teachers asked to teach in the actel program are usually well known in the system and have a good reputation. They have to be bright and creative and above all, they must be people who are not threatened by gifted children.

Interviewer: Is there a recommended curriculum for the academically talented?

Principal: The teachers of the gifted are always writing their own curriculum and have to be able to articulate what they are doing to the parents. I would choose a teacher for the grade 5 and 6 actel classes differently than I would choose a teacher for the grade 7 and 8 actel classes. The grade 5 and 6 actel teacher has to teach the children the learning skills that will be the tools that will equip them to pursue their individual areas of interest. However in grades 7 and 8, the students need a teacher who will offer them the freedom to explore and to use the research skills that they have learned in grades 5 and 6. A few years ago, the actel classes were allowed total freedom to choose their areas of study. This approach proved to be disastrous for the students because their focus was so narrow that they didn't have a well-rounded understanding of the many subject areas. Consequently, when they graduated to high school, they were not prepared and found themselves at a disadvantage.

Interviewer: What is the philosophy underlying the provision for a program for the academically talented in grades 5 to 8 and then the placing of these same students in a regular high school program?

Principal: Many of the high schools now have programs for the gifted. At one school, they offer a mentorship program to the gifted students. This program allows the gifted child to spend extended periods of time with a person who is especially knowledgeable in a certain area. The mentor could be anyone who is accomplished in the arts or the professions.

Interviewer: What do you expect gifted children to learn in the classes for the academically talented?

Principal: My expectation for the children is that, first, they learn what their abilities are and, second, that they then learn those things in school that will release them to develop their abilities fully.

(Journal Notes, Nov. 26, 1984)

THE TEACHER PROFILE

Ms. W is a tall and extremely slim woman in her mid-twenties. Her reddish-brown hair which is worn short around her face accentuates her fair complexion. She is very involved in sports and she loves to cook. Her manner is friendly but efficient.

In an interview with Ms. W, I learned that she was born and raised in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan and attended Central Collegiate High School. As the interview continued, I learned more about her background.

> **Interviewer:** What made you decide to become a teacher?
>
> **Ms. W:** I didn't go into education first. I started into nursing, first year of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree at the University of Saskatchewan and then worked in a hospital in Moose Jaw after first year. It was then I realized it wasn't for me. Education lent itself well to transfer and it was a second choice. After I went into education, a coach at my high school in Moose Jaw told me that she always thought I'd go into education!
>
> **Interviewer:** What was your first teaching position?
>
> **Ms. W:** It was in Moose Jaw in grade 4 in the same school I went to with some of the same teachers!
>
> **Interviewer:** What grades have you taught since then?
>
> **Ms. W:** I've taught grades four, five, and six.
>
> **Interviewer:** How did you become involved in the actel program?
>
> **Ms. W:** A teacher retired at the end of grade five and the principal asked me if I wanted to try the year six. You realize that her retirement was considered to be midstream because usually in the actel program, the same teacher teaches the same class for grades five and six. I was apprehensive about the decision at first but one of the other actel teachers told me to go for it so I did.
>
> **Interviewer:** What do you see as your responsibility as a teacher of the gifted?
>
> **Ms. W:** My responsibility is to offer enrichment, to meet academic needs of students, to meet social needs with each other and with the school population, and to provide for their physical needs.

Interviewer: How would you describe your class?

Ms. W: They are energetic, gifted, talented, lovely, well-mannered, eager to learn, vivacious, talkative, and personable!

Interviewer: What are your future plans?

Ms. W: So far, to stay with the program for I don't know how long. Marriage, I hope, sometime in the future.

Interviewer: What do you expect the students to learn from the actel program?

Ms. W: I think that they should strive for the development of independence and a thirst for learning. They should learn to use their abilities to the utmost and to become well-rounded in their education rather than just developing skills in their area of strength. They should learn acceptance for all people and should be able to come to terms with their own abilities and weaknesses and with others' abilities and weaknesses.

(Teacher Interview, Sept. 1984)

THE CLASSROOM SETTING

There are 30 children in the class with an even number of boys and girls. Their age range is from ten to eleven years old and their I.Q. scores range from 130 to 160, with a large percentage being in the 135 to 140 range. All except four of the children live outside of the neighborhood and rely on the bus, parents driving, or on a bicycle to transport them to and from school. Children who live outside of the community also bring lunch to eat at the school. Ms. W tells me that they are all from homes that have an upper middle class standard of living. There is only one boy in the class who is from a single parent family. Eleven of the thirty children have siblings who have either been through the actel program or who are presently in it.

LIFE IN THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT

September 7, 1983

I arrive at Greenfield School at 12:45 p.m. to begin my research. It is a warm but overcast day. The bell rings at 12:55 p.m. and I walk down the clean, wide hall to greet Ms. W and about nine children. Students file into the room and sit in desks that are arranged in pairs. Attendance is taken by Ms. W who indicates that the topic for the day is 'The Worst Thing That Happened to Me This Summer.' Rather than saying "present" when their names are called, the children comment on the topic of the day. Some of the comments relate to "The long drive to Edmonton," "Mosquitoes," "My brother," "Putting off going to the lake for three days," "My Mom staying in the hospital for another month," and "Leaving Hong Kong."

As Ms. W reads the book Dicey's Song orally, I study the room in which I will be a frequent visitor for the next five months. There are cubicles for coats along the back wall of the room and Ms. W's desk is also at the back of the room. Windows line one wall and afford a view of the tarmac area and playground. The front wall is covered with blackboards and the remaining side wall includes cupboards and shelving as well as a sink. The room is painted a pastel pink color and is further decorated with colorful bulletin boards, and above the sink is a green and yellow homework board that meets the eye as you go out the door. A set of moveable bookshelves is stacked with books to read and also encases sets of reference books. A mobile, a hanging plant, and a clock further dress the room. The floor is covered with white-flecked gray linoleum that is clean and shiny. Ms. W has kindly put a chair and a table at the back of the room for me and this serves as my observation station.

This classroom smells like most classrooms—a combination of sharpened pencils and clean but active children along with a touch of humid fruit and food, and the smell of floor wax.

The children look like a mixture of many races: Chinese (2), East Indian (2), Native Indian (1), and white. They range in size from a child who looks like she is only big enough for grade 2 to a student who could be 14 or 15 years old. As they read, a few of the children acknowledge my presence by turning around and smiling at me. It's the girls that acknowledge me.

As I observe the children on this first day, it occurs to me that they do not look any different than a class of children of heterogenous ability and, when I remind myself that they represent the top at least 10% of the population in terms of measured I.Q., I feel a sense of respect for, and confidence in, their ability to learn.

Ms. W closes the book Dicey's Song and asks the children to take out their poetry sheets. These sheets are organized in a particular order and each sheet teaches a lesson about a form of poetry. The students write their examples of the poetic form on lines provided on the sheet.

Ms. W says, "Today we'll be looking at personal interest poetry topics that are of special interest to you. What are some topics of interest to you?"

Students reply, "cats," "tennis," "dogs."

Ms. W asks, "What are some phrases that would describe cats?"

The students contribute many adjectives that describe cats and Ms. W writes them on the blackboard. Some of the words include aloof, playful, black as night, velvet paws, kitty litter, green eyes, stalking, and preening.

Ms. W looks at Cole and demands, "Shh, be quiet Cole!" A minute later, she turns from the blackboard and says, "You group of five boys are becoming annoying. Is that going to carry on?"

"No, at least I won't carry it on," replies Cole.

Ms. W checks with the other four boys and they all indicate that they do not plan to continue to be annoying.

"Let's make a class poem. What phrases would you include in our class poem?" asks Ms. W.

Individual children quickly contribute phrases that become part of the poem and then one person reads the completed poem orally to the class. Ms. W refers to the personal interest poetry sheet that the children have in front of them and gives last minute instructions before the children begin the assignment. "If you wrote 'Cats, furry little animals,' I would expect more. That's not even a poem! Don't worry about finishing and, no, it's not for homework. I just want you to work your little hearts and souls out until it's time to finish. These are personal interest poems. Okay Patrick, you can get started now."

The room is silent as the children work on their poems. After approximately fifteen minutes has elapsed, a few children go to Ms. W's desk to show her their poems. She compliments their work with, "Excellent! Very Good!" Finally she asks the class, "Who would like to share their poems? Three people? Good for you. You shouldn't be ashamed. I've read some and they're fabulous!" The children read their poems orally and are then instructed to take out their envelopes with the puzzles that they are constructing.

The time for recess is fast approaching and Ms. W informs the class, "Recess is in five minutes so put your puzzles back into the envelope. How many want to stay in at recess to work on it? That means no fooling around! Line up if you're going out for recess. The puzzle must be done for Monday."

When the children return to the classroom after recess, they line up and walk single file to the changing rooms off of the gymnasium to change into their exercise clothes. The gymnasium has an attractive open beam ceiling that looks rich. A stage is at one end of the gymnasium and the climbing apparatus hands on one side wall. There are six basketball hoops and the floor is tiled with brown linoleum.

As the students enter the gymnasium, someone complains, "Laps—I haven't run all summer! I'll never make it!" The warm-up consists of ten laps around the gym and Ms. W joins in the run. After she has finished ten laps she asks, "How many of you didn't do ten laps?" Some children put up their hands. "Try to stay after class and finish your laps!"

The children listen well to the instructions given for the games. Most of them are quite well coordinated and look slim and fit. There are four or five children who are plump and who do not move quite as quickly.

As I watch the children move, some questions occur to me that I would like to ask them. For instance, what do you like best about school? What do you like least? I'm also interested in knowing how much of what is taught in the actel progran is extended outside of school in terms of hobbies and creative activities.

* * * * *

The questions that I formulated were a result of feeling that the children did not seem to be able to make themselves known in a classroom that was so high structured. Although some resisted the task orientation by socializing with peers, the other children willingly conformed to the pace and scheduled tasks set by Ms. W. If today was an indication of how most of their school days were structured, would the gifted in this class need to have the opportunity to be involved in more creative activities and hobbies outside of the school context?

* * * * *

September 12, 1983

As the children enter the classroom this morning, Ms. W asks them, "Any money or permission slips?" Some children bring money and permission slips for upcoming events to her desk and then go to their desks for fifteen minutes of uninterrupted and sustained silent reading—USSR for short. At exactly 9:15 a.m., the children stand for "O Canada" and sing quietly, accompanied by the piano music played on the tape recorder. It is Dana's turn to lead the class in the Lord's prayer and she then adjusts the temperature and weather charts. The news of the day is offered by five or six children and then as Ms. W says, "Take out your math please," two boys slip behind my chair to their cubicles to retrieve their notebooks. I overhear one boy saying quietly to the other boy, "I took everything home and didn't do a thing!" The other boy replies, "Is that right?" To which the first boy answers, "Yeah, but I'll finish it over the weekend. When is the graphing assignment due?" "On Monday, I think," replies the other boy. "Oh good!" says the first boy in a way that indicates to me that he is relieved.

* * * * *

The class is listening attentively as Ms. W reviews the metric measurements and their equivalents. One younger boy from the grade four class comes into the room for math.

"Wait for four sheets to be handed out to you," instructs Ms. W. "Don't go digging for foolscap yet."

The math is explained and three steps are required: (1) the equation, (2) the answer, and (3) the statement.

"There's not enough room on the paper!" says a student anxiously.

"That's why you'll use looseleaf," Ms. W answers.

Many students say, "Ohhh" in unison. Then Ms. W asks, "What is the distance between notches on the ruler, Clayton?"

Clayton answers, "Five."

Ms. W says, "No."

Another student gives the answer "sixty." Ms. W says, "yes," as Clayton hits the boy next to him to show that he's frustrated that he didn't get the right answer.

Ms. W instructs the class further by saying, "On page four, the problem asks you to write down kitchen objects. Which ones are less than 6 cm?"

"A toothpick," offers Karen.

"The width of a spoon handle," says Jeremy.

"If you work ferociously until 10:20 a.m., you may have talk time," says Ms. W.

Clayton asks, "Do we put the looseleaf sheet of answers behind the four sheets or in the back?"

Ms. W answers, "They can go behind the four sheets of questions." The children work silently for about fifteen minutes and Ms. W interrupts them and says, "Take a look at Krista's work. This is how it should be done. Nice sharp pencil!"

Sherry slips into class at 9:50 a.m. because she takes French at a nearby high school. Ms. W says to Lisa, "Would you tune Sherry into what we are doing?" The desks are arranged in pairs and there is a buddy system in operation where desk partners are expected to keep track of what the partner might have missed in school if they are late or absent. Lisa is Sherry's buddy or desk partner.

Although Ms. W explains the math very clearly and in depth, some of the students are still having difficulty following the directions. Jack, the grade four boy who joins Ms. W's math class, is very expressive and ready with an excuse for anything that he doesn't know right away. He is quite cute with his blonde hair and glasses and his bubbly personality. Students come to Ms. W to ask questions or they put up their hands at their desks and Ms. W goes to them.

As I walk around the class, I ask one of the girls how many pages of problems she has to do, and she says that there are four pages. "In twenty-four minutes?" I ask.

"Oh that will be lots of time!" she exclaims.

Ms. W pipes up with, "All of you who are having trouble with number four, let's look at it together." When demonstrating the solution to the problem, Ms. W used props that were difficult to hold, in order to represent the skeins of wool in the problem. The children clap when she manages to hold all nine props. Ms. W smiles and bows.

Jason says to Jeremy, "I'm done number four," and Jeremy theatrically pats him on the head.

Ms. W says, "You can have talk time or you can finish your math. No, I'll give you time to finish on Monday so you can get into your groups for an organized talk time."

As the children are involved in talk time Ms. W says to me, "These kids don't need university level math. They have trouble enough with the simple things."

After recess, it's time for a treasure hunt. Ms. W says to the class, "Let's go and put your treasure clues up.

Be polite. Walk please. Mrs. Van Hesteren and I will be in the halls and Mrs. W, the Principal, knows what you are doing." The children exchange maps and off they go. Patrick's map looks authentic because it is burned around the edges and has smoke stains on it.

I walk into the hall feeling uncomfortable that Ms. W expects me to play a supervisory role with the children. If I am put in a position of authority, I could lose the chance to develop the kind of rapport with the children that would facilitate the research. I check back in the classroom and Dana is standing by a table with laminated sheets piled on it. I ask, "What are these laminated sheets for?"

"They're desk mats for art—you know—when things get messy. I suppose you could use them as worksheets but they'd be too simple!"

It's still raining and some of the treasures are outside. Some of the treasures being hidden include a cherry blossom chocolate treat, freshen up gum, a banana bread loaf, a pencil sharpener, apple juice, jelly beans, a pen, and bubble gum. The children return to the classroom with their treasures and thank one another for the treats. Ms. W says to me, "The children have had a treasure hunt three times. They really like it and their maps are getting more and more complicated."

Ms. W reads Dicey's Song as the children sit at their desks enjoying their treasures. Todd fell in the mud during the treasure hunt and so will not sit in his desk because his pants and socks are dirty. He tried unsuccessfully to wipe the mud off with paper towels. He says quietly to me as Ms. W is reading, "This is the first time ever that I've worn these new white socks and they're really dirty." He doesn't appear to be crushed, but is just aware of the dirt.

The book is closed and Ms. W chooses three people to help with the ungraded handicapped children at lunch. She then asks, "Any comments about the treasure hunt? Hands up!"

The children offer comments such as "Challenging! I loved it! Thanks for organizing it!"

Ms. W says, "Say good bye to Mrs. Van Hesteren because she will see us after the weekend."

The children say "good bye" and "have a good weekend" as they turn around and look at me at the back of the room. Sherry comes back to my table and asks how to spell my name. Another student asks when I'll be back and for how long. I told her that I would be coming on Monday and Friday afternoons and on Wednesday and Thursday mornings. Many students smiled and said good bye again as they passed by my table on the way to their cubicles to get their lunches. They are a very pleasant group.

On my way out of the school, I ask the music teacher, Mrs. S, if I can sit in on her music classes with Ms. W's students. She says, "yes" immediately and tells me that she teaches the gifted children exactly what she teaches the non-gifted students. Her curriculum includes ukelele and singing.

As I leave the school today, I remember what Ms. W told me about how the gifted children are regarded by at least one other teacher in the school. She said, "Ms. Y who teaches the non-gifted in Division One is very against the idea of the actel program and carries that conviction to include a bias against actel teachers and students."

* * * * *

I sense that there is much pressure experienced by the students. The children perform their opening exercises at a certain time and in a ritualistic fashion. They are concerned about getting work done on time and about arranging their sheets in the correct order. Right answers are very important to them and they feel embarrassed when wrong. Talk time is a reward for working diligently and even here they are pressured to visit only in their talk time groups that have been chosen by Ms. W. Desk buddies must keep one another informed which demands that all students are listening carefully all of the time. At the beginning of the Treasure Hunt, the children are told that Ms. W, the Principal and I will all be watching them and so are pressured to behave in an appropriate manner. I also feel that their courteous and friendly behavior towards me is a result of a kind of pressure that they feel. How do students experience these pressures? Why are they so anxious to respond to all of these pressures in a way that will please their teacher? It is just the beginning of the new term and maybe the children are especially anxious to be excellent students. Time will tell.

The music period is over and I am telling Ms. S how beautifully the children played their ukeleles and sang. Dana overheard me and piped in with, "It's good to have you there because we always seem to do better when someone is watching us—someone new!"

* * * * *

After observing the children in the classroom today, I note that they are most anxious to please and to receive positive feedback from their teachers. So far I have seen the teacher-student interaction but I haven't had a chance to visit with the students as individuals or in a group. I'll discuss the possibility of setting up an interview schedule so that I can visit with each child for fifteen minutes. I plan to tape the interviews. I also plan to go out for recess and to observe the children at play and to see how they socialize.

* * * * *

September 14, 1983

I visit briefly with Ms. M who is also on outside supervision this cool windy fall morning. I notice that three girls from Ms. W's class are on the tire swings on the creative playground. I walk past the rink to where Ms. W's children are playing but find only two girls and three boys from the class. The bell rings and Dana and I walk around the rink the long way. Dana informed me that "All of the kids in the class always play in that area."

"But there were only five of you there today," I said.

"Yes, but the others are in Ms. A's class selling tokens for the burger sale on Friday," replies Dana. If they weren't there, they'd be playing in that area. That's where all of the kids from our class play."

"I noticed Sherry and two other girls from your class on the creative playground swings," I said.

"Oh well," replies Dana, "some of the girls play there some of the time."

* * * * *

Why is it important to Dana that she tells me emphatically that all of the children play in a certain area all of the time? Do they play together as a group? I hope to find out the answers to some of these questions in the interviews and through observing the children further. The Principal suggested that I send home a letter to the parents informing them of my intention to interview their children and to invite them to call me if they have any further questions. This letter is in Appendix A.

* * * * *

September 15, 1983

It's 8:45 a.m. on a beautiful sunny morning as I enter the school from the staff parking lot. Ms. W is in her classroom talking to two other teachers about her math program. The bell rings and the children enter the classroom as usual and sit in their desks for fifteen minutes of silent reading. At 9:15 a.m. the children are involved in morning exercises which include the singing of "O Canada," the reciting of the Lord's Prayer and the sharing of news and weather for the day.

Ms. W says, "It's math time. Get out your notebook and I'm handing out graph paper. Setting up a page of graph paper is important."

Jeremy asks, "Can I use pen to write numbers on my square?"

Ms. W, "Use pencil please. The concept of area can be shown using graph paper. The area of different geometric figures can be found by using graph paper too. This is grade seven and eight material and is really tackled in high school but I think that you can understand it. We covered area with the good old area formula two days ago so you are all familiar with it."

The students are very attentive and are following the lesson carefully. At one point, Ms. W asks the question, "What's 4 x 2—obviously—Patrick?"

Patrick answers, "Six."

There is an explosive laugh that seems to be emitted involuntarily by about eight students. They are very surprised that the answer is wrong. Ms. W states the question again and Patrick gives the right answer.

The children work on an assignment and Jack, the young boy that joins Ms. W's class for math says to the boys around him, "If you take the square root of something, it will help you. . . ."

One of the other boys chides, "You don't even know what square root is."

Jack replies, "Okay so I'm just a useless person."

The other boys laugh and say, "He's just a useless person."

Ms. W says to the class, "Bring your calculators tomorrow please. Now you have eleven minutes of talk time."

I hand out the letter to the students regarding the interviews and the bell rings for recess. Cole says, "We've been freed!"

* * * * *

The children seem to enjoy the challenge of doing advanced work in math and their concentration is intense. The idea that Patrick would get the wrong answer to such a simple question as 4 x 2 really surprised some of them. Is the fact that Jack felt that he was a useless person when he did not know something indicative of the importance of academic competence to the children? Is their sense of worth dependent upon doing well in school?

When the bell rings, Cole suggests that he has been freed. To what extent do the children feel like captives in the classroom? They don't seem to resist the teacher's control of their time, space and behavior. In fact, the students seem to be highly motivated to do their best in any task specified by the teacher. She has a great deal of power and responsibility. I am interested in how she chooses curricular materials for the students, too.

We are having lunch at a restaurant and I ask Ms. W, "How do you choose subject matter and curriculum materials?"

"I use the curriculum guides but try to choose really interesting activities and subject matter. In math we're doing measurement together because it seems to be especially tough. I follow the math curriculum for individuals depending on where they are. Some are part way through grade six math while some have just finished grade five. In language arts we'll be doing novels and I'll use networking. In social studies we're doing a newspaper unit and in science, we're getting ready for camp and then we'll do logical thinking problems."

Although lunch was nice, I didn't really feel that I knew how Ms. W chose the subject matter. Back in the classroom this afternoon, the children are preparing to teach a lesson at camp. Each group of three students has a topic that they are preparing for presentation to the non-graded students who will be with them at camp. It just occurred to me that camp may be the best place to begin my interviews with the children. Ms. W agrees with the idea and announces to the children that they can book a visit with me during camp time. It is up to them to let me know when they are free to visit.

* * * * *

September 21, 1983

This is the day that the children have been waiting for! Today they go to camp with the non-graded class and they will be there for three days and two nights. The goal of this camp is to integrate the thirty gifted students and the nine non-graded handicapped children in a number of different activities so that the rapport, trust and friendship that has already been initiated through the volunteer work of the gifted in the non-graded class will have a chance to deepen. The gifted and the handicapped will sleep in the same bunkhouses and will share meals together. The gifted will teach an arts and crafts lesson to the non-graded students at camp. Mrs. A, the teacher of the non-graded children, will be at camp and her two teacher aides will also be there to help with the handicapped children.

There's a nip in the air but the weather is beautiful! We are all heaving a sigh of relief because there is snow in Regina and Alberta this week and we were afraid we'd have to cancel the camp.

The children were involved in camp sessions at the school this morning such as the photography and the camera-use session. They had lunch at school and came out to Beaver Creek on a bus.

I arrive at about 2:30 p.m. and the children are having free time. Todd hurries up to my car and says, "I have time to visit now."

"Will you help me unload my gear, Todd, and then we'll talk?" I asked.

"Sure," agrees Todd and off we go to the cabin that Ms. W indicates is the staff cabin.

There are five cabins and each one has sixteen bunkbeds in all and two bathrooms. The cabins are heated and the floor is covered with wall to wall flecked indoor-outdoor carpeting. We are alone in the cabin and so I set up my tape recorder to record my visit with Todd.

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The purpose of the interviews was to get to know the students on a one-to-one basis outside of the structure of the classroom and for them to feel more comfortable with me as a researcher in the classroom. I wanted to find out more about their decision to enter the actel program in grade five and how they felt about being in the program after experiencing it for a year. Because the questions referred to their past experiences, I hoped that I would learn not only what was important to them last year but I would be made aware of their perspective for this year. In an attempt to learn more, I planned to ask some comparison questions. For example, how does being in the actel program at Greenfield School compare to being in the regular program at your old school? How does this year in grade six compare with last year in grade five? What has changed and what has stayed the same socially and academically? I was also most interested in knowing how the children experienced the structure in the classroom and so asked them to plan an ideal school day, one that would be most to their liking. If they liked the structure in the classroom, their ideal day might not deviate much from what was. If they didn't like the structure, their planned day would be much different than Ms. W's day. Questions to do with hobbies and future career goals were included to find out what students liked to do in their spare time and also to find out what their aspirations were in future time. Both hobbies and future career goals could influence the students' perspective on the school experience in Ms. W's class. The interview questions can be changed or added on to depending on what the children reveal to be important or significant to them in their experience.

The first interview was with Todd and I asked him most of the questions listed in Appendix B. Here are his answers to the interview questions.

Interviewer: How does Greenfield compare to your old school?

Todd: Well, I like the kids a lot more.

Interviewer: What else was different at first?

Todd: I thought maybe some of the friends at my old school would leave me and I wouldn't get any friends in Greenfield or maybe the teacher wouldn't be nice. I think I was most tense when I was deciding if I should keep going to my old school or if I should go to Greenfield.

Interviewer: How did you make that decision?

Todd: Well, my brother said—he was in the actel program. Now he's in Grade 10—he said that the way he did it, he wrote down on a piece of paper what would be good and what would be bad and so I wrote that down and I had about two bad things and about ten good things.

Interviewer: What were the good things?

Todd: I think I wrote that I'd keep some of the friends at my old school that I'd still have and I'd get more friends at Greenfield so I'd have more friends and maybe I'd have a chance of getting a better teacher than I had at my old school.

Interviewer: What were some other pluses?

Todd: I can't remember. I think one of them was to take the bus. I thought that would be kind of neat but now I just get sick on the bus.

Interviewer: How do regular classroom children regard the actel kids?

Todd: Well, for instance, when the kids are playing hockey in the winter, sometimes they don't let actels play.

Interviewer: Why?

Todd: I don't know.

Interviewer: Guess.

Todd: Maybe they're jealous and a lot of the time they just bug us. They exclude us and tease us.

Interviewer: How are your friends different here than at your old school?

Todd: Well, I think they're better friends. I'm closer to them and they're more creative. They're just a lot better.

Interviewer: What about the subject matter—how does it compare?

Todd: It's a lot better. Ms. W teaches us how to do art—she just doesn't tell us what to do and then doesn't explain it. Like in my old school we'd do things like make little paper fans and stuff and it wasn't that fun.

Interviewer: What's your favorite subject?

Todd: I like gym and we have a poetry subject and I like poetry.

Interviewer: What do you want to be when you grow up?

Todd: I want to get a DVM, a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

Interviewer: Oh great—do you have pets?

Todd: Right now I have a cat.

Interviewer: What are your hobbies?

Todd: I like doing models every once in a while. I don't like doing snap togethers. I'm doing one now that I got for my birthday from Patrick and it's pretty hard and I've just finished putting on the wheels and the engines.

Interviewer: What do you think of adults?

Todd: I like them but I think sometimes that some adults get kind of angry too quick and they're just like kids but big models and usually a bit better in things.

Interviewer: What would a day in school be like if you could plan it?

Todd: Well, I'd probably make it on a Saturday so you wouldn't get bored on Saturday and I'd give it for all the other days—you wouldn't have to go to school all the other days. I'd have cartoons first in the morning and then they'd come to school and I'd have a really long phys. ed. period probably about 2½ hours long or 3 hours.

Interviewer: What would you do in the six days that you weren't in school?

Todd: I don't know. Maybe just in the afternoons when the soap operas were on I'd have phys. ed. and lunch.

Interviewer: What would you do in the mornings?

Todd: I don't know. Sleep in.

Interviewer: What don't you like about school?

Todd: Probably the only thing I don't like about school is some of the kids that bug me.

The interview with Todd was informative and relaxed because Todd's personality is friendly and relaxed. He is a fair-haired boy of average height and build and is mature and easy to communicate with. He asked me to come to his cabin after the interview to see how it was organized. When we arrived, he pointed out who slept where as two of his cabin mates were rough housing.

From the interview with Todd, I became attuned to the importance of friends when making the decision to enter actel. It was a risk to leave old friends with no guarantee that new friends would be made at a new school. Another consideration in making the decision to go to Greenfield School was the chance that he would have a better teacher. He likes the actel program better than the regular program and he has better and more creative friends. He said that the actel children are teased by some of the regular classroom children at Greenfield and are excluded from their games. The two things that he doesn't like are taking the bus because it makes him sick and being around some kids that bug him.

Ms. W came by Todd's cabin to call us in for the tie-dying of t-shirts in the recreation and dining hall. The gifted children were grouped with the nine mentally and physically handicapped children who were at camp with them. The handicapped children range in age from six years old to fourteen years of age and include five girls and four boys. They are all retarded and some have other handicaps. For example, Tracy is a ten year old mongoloid dwarf, and Derk is a six year old autistic boy. Cindy is hydrocephalic and wears a helmet to protect herself in case she falls down and hits her head, and Jackie is a blind dark haired girl who moves well and has good balance.

After the tie-dying activity, dinner is served. The handicapped children are helped by their buddies from Ms. W's class as they all sit at the big picnic tables in the dining hall for their spaghetti and meatsauce dinner. The children are well mannered and there is a relaxed atmosphere in the camp group. After dinner, Krista was free to visit. Krista and her identical twin, Giselle, are both in Ms. W's class and seem to be very popular with their classmates. They both have short curly blonde hair and radiant smiles. Krista is more verbal than Giselle and this is how the interview went.

> **Interviewer:** What's it like to be at Greenfield compared to your old school?
>
> **Krista:** Well the teachers are both the same—they're really nice and the kids are really nice too but in Greenfield I find it's more—the kids have more personality and everything because last year or two years ago, I really didn't like going to our itinerant teacher for the gifted because like you'd just go and you'd miss your gym period or art period. You'd have to catch up but it wouldn't be as fun without all the other kids doing it with you. And the stuff we'd do with the itinerant was not much. Like the stuff we'd do like we'd do novel studies and, like, reports on them or make models of characters or whatever.
>
> **Interviewer:** How did you make your decision to come here?
>
> **Krista:** Well I thought for a month I'd just try it out and then after the month was over I thought I could go back or just stay there and when the month was over, I decided well I'll stay here for a while and I can change back next year but I just want to find out how the people are because they seem exciting.
>
> **Interviewer:** Why are your friends here better friends?

Krista: Well, they're just more at my level—not that the other people were stupid or anything but I enjoy working with them and talking about things that they know or, like, novels they may have read.

Interviewer: How does the subject matter differ from your old school?

Krista: Well, last year—two years ago at my old school we didn't do much and like, didn't have as many field trips and really interesting stuff, but here we go on excursions and camp and, like, we do everything and we learn about it and it is a much more fun idea to get out of the classroom and learn rather than stay in the classroom for most of the year and just learn. It gets kind of boring.

Interviewer: What do you miss about your old school?

Krista: I do miss my friends a lot and my teacher—Mr. Kickus—he knows Ms. W and he's just a great guy and I miss him but he's gone to work at a Board of Physical Fitness something and so either way, I'd miss him but nothing much has been happening at my old school. Like, it's just math and—they get homework on the first day which I don't agree with.

Interviewer: Do you get a lot of homework?

Krista: Not usually unless like you missed a day. Like I had to go for a fluoride treatment so I missed part of that.

Interviewer: What are your hobbies, Krista?

Krista: I like doing crafts~~.~~—anything—like stained glass, weaving, I've done embroidery, clay work—like everything you think of, I've done and I just enjoy doing that and I enjoy doing things with my friends—like being around people.

Interviewer: You're good around people, I've noticed.

Krista: Yeah, and here it's easier. You can just go up and talk to anybody like if you're mad at somebody or something or you just want to get something off your mind, you can go up to anybody in our class and say, "Hey I've got something I want to talk to you about or something like that and at our old school you'd have to go to one of your most personal friends.

Interviewer: In what other ways is it easier?

Krista: Here it's fine talking to people but at my other school I used to go up to my best friend Kathy and talk and she and I like—two years ago, did everything the same and loved the same things and were even the same height—I was half a centimeter taller but like we did everything the same—we both had brothers and sisters that were pests—like she has two older sisters—one's in grade nine and another is in grade seven and so—like they'd bug her about boys and everything just bug her and she'd come to me and I'd tell her how much Grant was bugging me and how he wouldn't share his space lego. Then if I was mad and now, I just go and play space invaders—we got an Atari a few weeks ago.

Interviewer: How old is your brother, Grant?

Krista: He's eight—and so I just go and kill all those space invaders but you know if I'm mad—I used to go and talk it over with Kathy and we'd go and hike and hike. There's this train station not very far away from our place—like it's only three blocks or something and nobody knows about it except us and we just go there and go up an alley and it's right behind people—like civilization—at the edge. The backyards are there but nobody really goes there or anything—there's a nice hill. You can get some kind of weed almost like dandelions but they have big puff balls like this that you blow on and its really fun and you can go down—there's a swamp there you can catch frogs or you can pick flowers and you can put money on the track and the train will run over it and it'll be really neat.

Interviewer: Do you still see Kathy?

Krista: Oh yeah—like most people at our old school have changed—one person got nicer but now people just—I don't know—since they've been in the new wing—like once you get to grade five, you're in the new wing—at grade five your head just seems to get so big—you just think you're the best and everything and that happened with our class but Kathy's still the same but a lot of people just got big heads—like—now they're reasonable—like they're not so proud about being in the new wing.

Interviewer: How do people who are not in actel at Greenfield regard you?

Krista: Well, there's a few people that call us "akkers" and they think that we act big and everything—we may seem to be to them.

Interviewer: Why do they behave that way?

Krista: They think that we're smarter than them and so that means that we're a whole new world above them—really we're just the same.

Interviewer: Why do they think that way?

Krista: I think they're jealous.

Interviewer: Is it a real problem?

Krista: Well you just ignore it but like it's one or two people. It's okay though. Most of the whole school is just great.

Interviewer: Are these people who tease you older or younger than you?

Krista: About the same age—like just when you get into grade five—like once they're used to you and know your personality and everything, they just lay off—they—like—just leave you alone. Like at the first week, it's always uncomfortable but I found it exciting. Like everybody who asked me during the summer holidays how I liked school I'd tell them that I was going to a new school and was so excited and I'd talk to them for fifteen minutes about how great our new school would be and I don't even know them or anything but . . .

Interviewer: What do you think of adults as a group?

Krista: They're great! I like being around people of any age and adults can teach me a lot more than I'll ever know.

Interviewer: Do you ever find that you are disappointed in adults?

Krista: No, I find them almost as easy to talk to as kids my own age—like—it's just easy being around them because all of the people I know are really great.

Interviewer: What are you going to be when you grow up?

Krista: A vet—I love animals.

Interviewer: Do you have animals at home?

Krista: Oh yeah—we've got a big 50 gallon tank for fish. We have four big catfish and two babies and we have two gerbils "Apricot" and "Fluffy".

Jeremy: [opening the cabin door] Time for films in the rec hall.

Interviewer to Krista: I'm keeping you from films—thanks so much for visiting with me.

In my visit with Krista, I found that some of her ideas were similar to Todd's. For example, the importance of friends were mentioned first by both of them and they agreed that they liked their actel classmates better than the children from their old schools. Both liked the actel program and Krista specifically mentioned the fact that the many field trips made learning exciting. The experience of being excluded by some of the children from the regular classes is a common one for Todd and Krista.

Krista used the word "like" several times. I wonder if it is considered to be fashionable in her peer group to use "like" in this way?

As I went to help with the dishes, Dawn wanted to talk but I told her that I had to wash the pots so would visit with her later. On my way back to my cabin, Dana ambushed me and wanted to visit.

Dana usually wears her medium brown hair in French braids and dresses neatly in a no frills matter-of-fact manner. She wears glasses and has a good command of language as can be seen in the following interview.

Interviewer: What would make them think you're square?

Dana: Well, my Mom last time we came to camp was bunk supervisor and some of the girls—like my friend Tanya—thinks my Mom's a square because when she came over for a sleepover we went to bed at 8:30 p.m. and we were quiet. She likes to be up til 10 p.m. and stuff like that and I like to get my sleep and they think that's crazy. Like at lunch hour, I said, "Well, I think I'm going to zonk out as soon as we hit our bunks" and all the kids thought I was crazy because I wanted to sleep.

Interviewer: What happens to you if you don't get your sleep?

Dana: Well, it's sort of like an allergic reaction. I get very very grumpy. It's the same as when I watch TV. We don't have a TV. I get irritable and I've got a bad temper. I've got a very bad temper when it gets bad. I don't seem to work well and I fall asleep quite often so I at least have to get nine hours of sleep. This morning wasn't a very good exception because my dog got sick and he was whining by 4:59 a.m. and I had to get up. He screams—you haven't ever heard a dog scream I suppose. Sounds like a horse that was being whipped—an awful sound. He's really sick. We don't know what it is but it could be spinal deteriorization so I just stayed up with him. I just brought my comforter and lay beside him.

Interviewer: So you're going to need your sleep tonight?

Dana: Yeah, plus Marla! I find it very easy to work with handicapped people and with younger people and older people too because I've got this veteran that I met. Well, it was sort of a byproduct of Sunday School because after Bible School they suggested to visit someone older and I'd always wanted to see a veteran's home and so I phoned up and they found me an old man from World War One or World War Two, a really nice old guy, Mr. Hartley. I've been visiting him. I think some of the children would think it's crazy to sit indoors and play shuffleboard. We invited him over for Sunday dinner once. He's a really nice man. He was in World War One and he's 86 years old and has a very good memory.

Interviewer: Do you value uniqueness?

Dana: Yeah, it's sort of being with my parents. They could have easily not had children and could have been very rich but they decided to have kids and it wasn't the thing then to have kids. It was to go out and have ski weekends and they've raised us quite strictly I think. Like we get grounded if we do much wrong but I respect them for that. And they think that if you're not being a you—Dad's really into Zen and I'm getting there and it's finding the en-u and you've gotta—to follow stuff—like if it's really fancy to get a Rolls Royce, then you get one. Well, their opinion is that things that are solid like a bunk post or something, are not important. They're not useful. Even if you lost everything in the world like Job did, it wouldn't make any difference, you've still got your family.

Interviewer: Tell me how you experience the subject matter in the actel class?

Dana: The thing that's good about it is Ms. W. She's really really nice. We do a lot of physical activity. Beforehand, I wasn't really interested and I was a bookworm but now I can do both. I find it easier to do physical activities with her and our subject matter is not the old boring math. Like we're doing grade eight math now—area—you saw. It's quite interesting and it's simple, I think, for all of us. So if you weren't going to get it, it could be even more broken down. Like Cole is very intelligent. He's probably the most intelligent of our class except that he can't work at school. He's a home person and he's not into sports but that doesn't really make that much difference.

Interviewer: Are you tolerant of other people's differences do you think?

Dana: I think so. It doesn't matter to me what color they are or the race, creed or nationality.

Interviewer: Although Cole doesn't follow the rules, he's still acceptable?

Dana: He's an exception.

Interviewer: How do you view adults?

Dana: Well, it really depends because some can be very immature and think they're hot shots just because they've passed a certain age—these are younger adults and then the older ones tend to have a bit more wisdom but then if people have tormented them, sometimes they can't stand being different, so they become a hermit or become very senile not wanting to be around people and that's why they're not liked. But I think if you're working toward ideal adultism, then you strive to be with other people and not just getting into one little group. Like doctors tend to be friends with doctors and garbage men with garbage men but there's no reason why doctors couldn't be friends with garbage men and garbage men with doctors.

Interviewer: What would you like to be when you grow up?

Dana: A police officer—it's the idea of the force that interests me and conquering bad.

Interviewer: In what other fields would you conquer bad?

Dana: Medicine, science.

Interviewer: What do you mean by bad?

Dana: A force that doesn't do good. Medicine would be a triumph over disease which is an evil force. Space technology—it's not quite evil but there's a race for it now. Suppose Russia decides to blow up the USA. I think they might be able to save a few people and if we have good enough medicine, we might be able to restore their eyesight and all the other senses but where would they go? If there was moon cities and stuff like that and so if you had an especially bad group of criminals, you could have a little station in the middle of nowhere and that would keep them from being mixed with other people. Also technology—you would learn to work with other people. You'd build up physical and mental aspects which in itself conquers evil.

Interviewer: What are your hobbies?

Dana: I don't really have many hobbies—I read a lot. I read literature. It's really simple because all I have to do is walk downstairs and my Dad has a library of his own down there. He's an English teacher so all I say is, "Dad give me a good book," and he hands one over. Dune was a pretty good book. I read that in grade three, I think. I picked it up off Dad's shelf. A lot of Mark Twain's books are good literature and I read that sometimes.

Interviewer: What is your schedule when you get home?

Dana: Well, I have to practice piano. I can't take the dog for a walk anymore because he's supposed to rest and now he's sick and I normally have to do a lot of housework and I study and read a lot of the time.

Interviewer: If you had a day—first of all, do you like school?

Dana: Um, huh.

Interviewer: Do you think there's a better alternative for education than school?

Dana: Not really—it's just that I think private tutoring at the home, if you're a home person, works but some people just can't stand not being around people.

Interviewer: What about you?

Dana: I'm a loner. I don't really mind. If I had my lessons sent to me in the mail and had no contact, I could live in a room doing lessons and getting food passed through a slot with no problem. I don't need people. I don't depend on them. I don't need them. If I have a good book, that's even better.

Interviewer: If you could plan an ideal school day, what would it include?

Dana: I would have about three hours of USSR. We don't need that long a lunch hour. What I think I'd like to see is have the—all you get is, let's say, an hour to play outside whenever you want but your work has to be finished. You get all the assignments for the day and then if you want, you get an extra sheet with all the extra assignments you could get done which would help you work ahead and you get at least four assignments done and then you can use some of your playtime up.

Interviewer: Do you like having a timetable?—or structure?

Dana: No, then, I think you get into computerization, you are a computer and you follow this and this and this step and you have contact with people but you're not doing anything. All you do is follow a little note of paper and suppose you sprain your ankle but your timetable says you're supposed to go to this class and if you get into the habit, I don't think you'd be worried about a sprained ankle. You don't get to care for yourself anymore. It's—you follow a timetable.

Interviewer: Does the timetable become more important than you as an individual?

Dana: Yeah. I understand that some students can't work without a timetable and so I accept it as something that happens and I try to make the best of what happens but I do try to work at my own pace like it's not—you finish this page—if I have to take it home, that's fine too but I'd probably work at my own pace and work as the way I wanted to work. If they said that that math method was wrong I'd probably do it their way but do it my way. Also that helps relieve stress and I know some adults when they say they're going on a holiday pick another family and yell at them and that doesn't relieve any stress and one interesting thing is it takes two weeks to relax a North American but it will probably take me half an hour.

Interviewer: How do you relax?

Dana: Well, I can make my mind completely blank. All you do is breathe. You think of nothing and if you think of something, it sounds exactly as if you said it. You can't tell the difference because it's so loud when you're concentrating.

Interviewer: Is doing things your own way also a way to relieve stress?

Dana: If you think this is only a method and you don't really believe in it, it would be creating more than it would be relieving because you sort of—am I going to get caught or not. You'd be very nervous about it but I suppose I'd do their method and finish all their assignments but then when I got home, I could work on my own problems—like just convert it if you like yards better than meters.

The tape ends as Dana is saying to me, "You have a struggle in yourself—yourself against yourself in terms of popularity. Sometimes the cost of popularity is too high. And then there's the fight between you and society. If you don't fit in, they think you're weird. If you do fit in, you lose yourself. You become computerized and programmed."

During the interview, Dana squirmed in her chair and couldn't sit still. She seemed to be physically uncomfortable.

After visiting with Dana, I added some interview questions to my list. Dana liked to play boy's games. How many children in this class have friends of both sexes? What would other people outside of the classroom think of a person having friends of both sexes? And of course the biggest question signalled by Dana was, "How important is it to be an individual with your classmates?"

Dana and I go back to the rec room for skits. A fire is burning in the fireplace and, after the skits are finished, hot chocolate and cookies are served and the children go to their cabins and to bed. The adults sit around the fire and visit. Cole's Dad joins us and says to me, "We are very pleased with Cole's adjustment in the actel program. He still gets teased because he likes classical music but there are five other students in his class now who also like it!" Finally the day was over as the adults went to their bunkhouses for the night.

* * * * *

September 22, 1983

The morning is sunny and warm and after breakfast I drive into town to pick up some more chicken for supper and to buy paper bags for the popcorn this evening. On the way back to camp, I picked up a dry sleeping bag for one of the handicapped boys named Bobbie who had wet his bed last night. I'm back at camp ready for some more interviews.

* * * * *

Jan is a very attractive dark-haired girl who radiates warmth when she smiles. In the interview she states that she had many friends in her old school but thought that she'd give Greenfield a try. Her new friends and Ms. W were key factors in her decision to stay in the actel program. Here is a section of the interview.

> **Interviewer:** In school here, what do you think of the subject matter and activities?
>
> **Jan:** At first I thought it was hard and then I got used to it and I think it's not so hard.
>
> **Interviewer:** How is it hard at first?
>
> **Jan:** I think she doesn't give us as much time to do homework as we did in my old school but she's much firmer about it.
>
> **Interviewer:** Was it mostly deadlines that you found difficult?
>
> **Jan:** Yeah.
>
> **Interviewer:** And the amount of work?

Jan: No, I don't think it was the amount of work that much—like I'm a person that leaves things to the last minute and I would always leave my homework to the last minute and I'd never get it done but this year I've really pulled together and I'm getting it done.

Interviewer: What subjects and activities do you like the best?

Jan: Well, I'm athletic—I love gym. I think science I like. I seem to like the activities you do and it's challenging.

* * * * *

Interviewer: People in class seem to be really good to Cole but . . .

Jan: They're not—Cole gets teased a lot. The girls don't like him. They tell him when he's around them to go away or something like that and they tease him because everybody likes soft rock and that and he loves classical music and I like classical music. I don't mind it and it just bugs me when they tease him.

Interviewer: Is there more tolerance for differences in your class?

Jan: Yes, well actually, Dana is—she's nine years old and she's really mature and she's really advanced and I don't know, but she's different than everybody else and she hates being different but—and she's like me—she can't stand people being teased or anything. She gets really upset. She's really emotional and I think the kids like Dana but they think she's a little weird at times, just like Cole, but I tried last year. We didn't like each other—like we liked each other but we weren't all that close. Then one day her Grandmother died of cancer and she was upset and so I was talking to her and I just noticed then how she's not different. She's as normal as other people but she just has different ways of communicating and different ways of making friends and that.

Interviewer: Do you think she has different values and priorities?

Jan: Yes, I think she's a real—she's outgoing but she's serious. She doesn't get as much fun out of life as other people do. I think she's more serious and she laughs and plays but not as much as the other kids in our class. And she doesn't hang on to the boys at all. She disgusts the boys. She'll stay away but she thinks boys should be as equal as girls and that like holding a boy's hand for instance she thinks there's nothing wrong with that. Boys are just the same as girls. They're just a different sex, and she doesn't really mind.

Interviewer: Do you agree with that?

Jan: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: How would you behave differently than she does?

Jan: I don't know. She had a good friend named Reid and he was a really good friend to her and she was teased a lot—like he was a best friend to her and she got teased a lot for it which I don't think that was right because it's just the same as having a girl for a best friend.

Interviewer: But it's different.

Jan: I act as though I don't mind when I'm around Krista. Like I play with all her friends. She's usually around the boys and but when Dana gets left out, it really does bother me. I think Dana is as equal as we are even though she's younger than we are and I know what it's like because I was always the youngest in my class since I skipped grade one and came here last year and since there was a lot of other kids that skipped grades as well and you know we were the same age and I find it better. I can communicate with older kids a bit better.

Jan is saying that not all people are equally accepted in class and that Cole and Dana are sometimes excluded because they're different. Dana was the one who was quite emphatic that all of the children played together all of the time. It will be interesting to see how other students interpret their situation. What is considered to be appropriate behavior around the opposite sex seems to be part of Dana's problem.

My interview with Debbie was next and it was not very productive. She seems to be quite unhappy and her voice is flat as she discusses the questions. Although she rarely smiles, she says that she feels positively about the actel program, Ms. W, and her friends in the actel class. When I ask her what she thinks of adults generally, she replies, "Well, I don't know. They're kind of mean sometimes, strict. They say you have to be there at this time or there, and children sometimes have no say about what they can do."

Patrick is the last person that I interview at camp and I found it to be most interesting.

> **Interviewer:** Did you find it to be quite an adjustment coming to this class?
>
> **Patrick:** Oh no, we adjusted very easy because everyone's very friendly—not like the grade four class where you just have a group of three say and everybody else is your enemy.
>
> **Interviewer:** Are your old friends from grade four still your friends?
>
> **Patrick:** Yeah, they're still my friends—they don't resent me or anything—they're still my friends.
>
> **Interviewer:** How do other people in the school regard you?
>
> **Patrick:** I don't know but other people in the school sort of resent it—other people who are in the same grade as I am but not in the actel program—they just resent it.
>
> **Interviewer:** Why do you think?

Patrick: Well, they're certainly not jealous—I don't think they really want to be in it but they say, "Oh, they just think they're so smart!"

Interviewer: Tell me about the curriculum and the activities that you're doing. What ones do you like best?

Patrick: Well, I like reading best because we don't just read the stories out of a boring reader and then recall everything—what we do is we just read books and answer certain questions about certain parts of the story or do creative work with the story instead of just reading the reader.

Interviewer: What about other subjects?

Patrick: It's a lot less boring because you don't use textbooks all the time. Textbooks are so boring and they don't really seem to help anybody—but with our spelling, we're sort of doing a list and studying dictionary words and everything—it's not quite as boring as a textbook.

Interviewer: What do you like best about being in this class?

Patrick: Well, I suppose, it's the school work that we do—it's a lot more exciting.

Interviewer: What are your hobbies?

Patrick: Well I like sports like baseball and that and I also like model cars and I also like to paint lead figures and I entered in a contest called "The Wizard's Challenge." It's run by the Wizard's Corner over by Broadway and like it was a really close match—like there's first, second, and third and then my Mom thought I got cheated out of third place because the winner of third place that I got cheated out of was the owner's son. It was really unfair because the only people who voted were those who participated in the tournament and you couldn't vote for yourself.

Interviewer: Do you enjoy art?

Patrick: Yeah, I really like drawing—not comics but animals in real life.

Interviewer: How do you regard adults?

Patrick: I really don't like some of them because in the commercials, all they think is kids are carefree and happy go lucky and they just do what they want to do, etc. and they're just so dumb and everything—like the Kool Aide commercials.

Interviewer: What gets you about them?

Patrick: Well, because the kids are so dumb in them. They say "Kids are kids, etc." and then they show kids acting really stupid in it.

[Talk about his trip to Guatemala.]

Patrick: I work better at home than I do at school because at home you just work but at school they make you do other things.

Interviewer: If you could plan a day at school to suit you, what would it include?

Patrick: It wouldn't include much math because I think the math is boring because all it is really is drills—I don't like the text—well I like gym so I'd put in a couple gym periods, recess.

Interviewer: What do you do at recess?

Patrick: Oh just walk around—there isn't much to do. Usually I bring my baseball glove and just practice pitching.

Interviewer: Do you play football or soccer with the other kids at recess or do you stick mostly with your own group?

Patrick: We stay mostly with our own class. Some people go to other classes but I usually stay.

Interviewer: What do you like best about being with your own group?

Patrick: You can just talk.

Interviewer: How would you describe your classmates?

Patrick: Well, they just accept people for what they are. They don't try to change people. They just accept people and let them in. They're more tolerant.

Interviewer: What else would you include in your day?

Patrick: Reading period because I love reading.

Interviewer: Would you need school at all?

Patrick: Just for friends.

Patrick finds the curriculum more interesting because of an absence of textbooks! Choice of pace is offered in math and this choice is appreciated by Patrick even though he finds math boring because a textbook is used. He has more friends in this class and his social group is larger. Krista had mentioned this also. Exclusion by regular classroom students sounds like an experience common to the actel children. Adults stereotype children as being quite stupid, at least in television commercials.

At camp, two mothers are helping with the lunch today and they are interested in my research. Shea's mom said, "Shea never had any friends in her school. She told me that she felt like all of the people around her were not real and that she was alone. She never knew she could be so happy in school until she went to Greenfield. She says that now she has lots of friends because everybody is weird and that's okay!"

Camp is over and we all have the weekend to rest up. I learned so much more in the interviews with the six children than I did by observing them in the classroom for three weeks. If the emphasis in the classroom was more on process than on product, the children could make themselves and their views more known. I will have to observe them more often at recess when they are out of the classroom. As a researcher, I now have some understanding of what is important to them and this should inform my participant observation and allow me to be more sensitive to the meaning of the interactions in the classroom.

* * * * *

September 26, 1983

Today is the first day back at school after camp and it is very warm and sunny. I get the feeling that we should still be at camp on such a beautiful day.

I visit with Jason this morning and he is tense and not very talkative. He has a lump on his neck and they don't know what it is. He's on antibiotics and looks pale. He had to miss camp and Ms. W told me that Jason is especially interested in working with the handicapped. Debbie is sent to give us a two minute warning and our interview ends. I hope that time limits like this two minute warning don't cut short some really meaningful interviews. If so, I would just see that student again to continue our visit.

* * * * *

In class, the children are preparing for the North Battleford Museum field trip on Wednesday, September 28. The children seem to be sluggish today. The end of the camping experience might have left them feeling tired. However to have another major field trip so soon would be considered to be a real treat by most students.

Ms. W says, "Do it neatly. It's part of your North Battleford fieldtrip booklet."

Dawn approaches Ms. W with a ditto sheet that was smudged and Ms. W agreed immediately that it had to be replaced. It didn't look neat and the booklet that would be completed after the field trip would be going home.

Ms. W gave me the five sheets for the North Battleford Trip and also a letter that is being sent home today regarding lunch at Ed's house tomorrow to learn about a Jewish feast which is part of the Feast of the Tabernacle.

Dawn wanted to visit during morning recess and Ms. W said that it would be fine. Dawn is a chubby girl with long dirty-blonde hair that looks tangled. Our visit is low key but interesting.

> **Interviewer:** What made you decide to come here?
>
> **Dawn:** Well, I had an offer to come here and I thought my old school was insane. Everybody was weird.
>
> **Interviewer:** Why do you say they were weird?
>
> **Dawn:** They acted weird.
>
> **Interviewer:** Did you have many friends there?
>
> **Dawn:** Not really—just one.
>
> **Interviewer:** What about here in terms of friends?
>
> **Dawn:** Oh, I have lots of friends here.

Interviewer: What's the difference between schools?

Dawn: At my old school sometimes I missed a lot of recesses because of itinerant classes for the gifted and that kind of thing.

Interviewer: What was your main concern in changing schools?

Dawn: I thought, "I don't know any of these people!"

Interviewer: What else?

Dawn: I've never been to this school before and I'm probably going to get lost going somewhere!

Interviewer: What are your hobbies?

Dawn: I collect bottle caps. I do all kind of craft things like latch hook and needlework and things.

Interviewer: What about sports?

Dawn: Oh, I swim and I roller skate.

Interviewer: What's different in this program in terms of your subject matter and materials?

Dawn: Well, in the other class like I was so, the teacher gave me a piece of paper to tell me what I was supposed to do but this year the whole class is working together at things.

Interviewer: Do you like that better?

Dawn: Yes, because if I'm working alone and I have some trouble and the teacher is talking to the class, I'm in trouble.

Interviewer: Here do you have choice in what you do?

Dawn: Sort of.

Interviewer: What are your teachers looking for?

Dawn: Well, making sure that it's not just something like "bunnies hop" or that kind of thing. She likes just little facts and she wants it neat. She wants us to do the best job we could.

Interviewer: If you had a day to plan at school, what subjects would you choose?

Dawn: Gym and music and art—the poetry isn't bad—and band—I like that.

Interviewer: What does school offer you that you can't get at home.

Dawn: Well, band and music and art.

Interviewer: What do you think of adults?

Dawn: I don't know—they're just humans too—kids are human. They're a good group of people and they help you with things.

Interviewer: What would you write to a penpal when describing this class at Greenfield School?

Dawn: For one thing, it's a good school and there's a nongraded class that we can help with at recess and camp.

Interviewer: What else would you say?

Dawn: Well some of the classmates are nice but some of them I'm not crazy about at all but the whole class gets along together pretty well.

Interviewer: How is your class regarded by other classes in the school?

Dawn: Just as another class.

Interviewer: Do you play with a lot of people from the other grade six class?

Dawn: Sometimes—not really often.

Interviewer: Are they friends of yours?

Dawn: Oh, some of them.

Dawn feels that the actel program offers her more friends and a class that she can work with. In the regular class she worked more quickly at a more advanced level and so was on an individualized program and worked alone. Dawn also mentioned that it was good to be able to work with the nongraded class at Greenfield School.

* * * * *

September 27, 1983

I arrived at school at 8:40 a.m. to interview Cory and here is how it went.

Interviewer: What made you decide to come here?

Cory: Before I came here I was in grade three so I went from grade three to grade five actel and I like it here. Before, for one thing, in my grade three class, I was always going to itinerant teachers and I was always going to other classes whereas here I have it all in one because I'd be skipping a grade and also being a tougher class it's more challenging.

Interviewer: Do you miss friends at the other school?

Cory: Yeah, I do but I can go to their house after school after I've finished my homework and play with them. Usually they phone me.

Interviewer: Do you have a lot of homework?

Cory: Sometimes it depends if we have a lot of classes—sometimes we do a lot of one subject which makes it less homework you know and some days we have lots of subjects and then I get more homework.

Interviewer: How much on the average do you do?

Cory: Well this past week I haven't had any homework because this past week I thought that something was due but it wasn't so I could do other things ahead.

Interviewer: How much work a day?

Cory: A half hour usually.

Interviewer: What do you think about the group of people you're with?

Cory: Hooo, I like them a lot! It's more exciting.

Interviewer: How does it compare to your old school?

Cory: Well, in grade three last year I was real popular but I was always racing from one classroom to another and usually I'd get locked out—out of my class because the other teacher would keep me in and like just to finish off the subject, he'd keep us in for about three minutes and everyone would go out and my teacher would lock the door and then I'd have to ask another teacher to get it unlocked.

Interviewer: How do other classes in the school regard your class?

Cory: Well, like in the younger grades, like in grade four I was in this singing group in grade five, I mean and this grade four said that actels are dumb, and they really have a negative attitude to you because they're induced by their brothers and sisters. Also, I know that some of the kids who said that are now in actel today.

Interviewer: How do you like the subjects you take in class?

Cory: I like it a lot because we're studying interesting things and gym I like better because we have four gym periods a half an hour each and I liked them better than my old school because there we'd have two one-hour periods but here I like it better because it is spread over four periods because it gives you more to look forward to.

Interviewer: How do you regard adults?

Cory: I think they're okay but I like Ms. W in gym because she does all the activities and in other subjects she does the activities and explains well to us.

Interviewer: What about adults in general?

Cory: Well, my parents are strict. They set up like a mini-school for me over the summer holidays so that I won't lose all that's taught.

Interviewer: What are your favorite subjects?

Cory: I like history; I like math—math I'm good in but I just have a slow pace.

Interviewer: What subjects don't you like?

Cory: Sometimes I don't understand French but last year I got an A in it.

Interviewer: If you had a day to plan at school, how would it go?

Cory: We'd have an hour of math, an hour of gym and some period of French.

[Discussion of his math ability.]

Interviewer: Would you like to have choice in every subject as you do in math?

Cory: Not every subject because math is pretty straight forward you know—we have sheets and they explain in the textbook but like in other subjects, you just have to go with the teacher and whatever she says because you keep on learning every time.

Interviewer: Do you think you need school?

Cory: Yes, because you know, like, I like learning about stuff but like if I didn't have school, I wouldn't be much you know when you grow up. I want to be in politics or law when I grow up.

Interviewer: What's most important in life to you?

Cory: Family, education and I like sports a lot.

Interviewer: What are your hobbies?

Cory: Well, sports and we have two computers at home—a Vic 20 and a Commodore 64. We're just about ready to sell our Vic 20.

Cory experienced the same kind of feeling of being displaced or not with a group in his regular class as Dawn did. He was popular at his old school but really enjoys his friends here. Although Dawn did not mention that the regular classroom students were unkind to the actel children, Cory talked about some name calling that he had experienced. His parents are very concerned about his learning. What are the attitudes of parents regarding their children's involvement in the actel program? When the decision to enter actel is discussed, the children do not mention their parents involvement in the decision. Is it taken for granted at the grade four level that of course parents would carry the responsibility for the decision? It was also interesting that Cory connected schooling and future career success. They have two computers at home. Do parents buy computers for their families to promote better education for their children? It is an interesting question.

Shea is the next person that I interview and she stands out in the class because she is the size of a seven year old. Despite her petite stature, she has the age appropriate social gestures and she is obviously alert and intelligent. It was Shea's mother that I visited with at camp and she was saying that Shea had friends and really felt that she belonged in the actel class. Here are parts of the interview with Shea.

> **Interviewer:** Do you have choice in subjects about what you want to do?
>
> **Shea:** Well, when we were reading 21 Balloons but in some things we get to choose—like there's 20 questions—do 15.
>
> **Interviewer:** What hobbies do you have?
>
> **Shea:** I love reading. I love doing crafts. I love babies. I just got a new little cousin.
>
> **Interviewer:** What do you want to be when you grow up?

> **Shea:** I want to be a teacher. I don't know—I've always wanted to be a teacher since I was little and I have this chalkboard in my room and I have a desk—I sort of wanted to be a surgeon because my uncle is a doctor and, well, he's terrific at it—he got the highest marks as a surgeon. And it sounds so interesting but it would be so hard. I don't know—I want to make the world better and to make all wars stop and do stuff like that. I want to grow up to be a person that does that.

The concept of choice is most interesting to me. Shea feels she has choice when she can pick fifteen out of twenty-one activities to do but the activities are all tasks set by Ms. W. Similarly, some of the children have mentioned that they have choice in their math pacing but the fact remains that the math schedules are drawn up by Ms. W and must be followed. It is encouraging to note that Shea wants to stop all of the wars and to make the world a better place in which to live.

During my interview with Anthony who is an exceptionally good looking boy, he told me about lunch time at school.

> **Anthony:** You can talk with your friends just sit in a group and talk with your friends.
>
> **Interviewer:** What do you talk about?
>
> **Anthony:** Well, sometimes we might talk about something like Dungeons and Dragons or we might just play a game—like yesterday we played Black Jack 21 or otherwise we'll just talk about comics or a game.

I will continue to ask the students about their lunch time socializing to find out what they do in their relatively free time together.

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September 29, 1983

I arrive at school at 8:40 a.m. and set up my tape recorder in the science room. It is a sunny but crisp fall day at 7°C. Tanya is waiting for me as planned. She is a chubby friendly girl with long hair and glasses and a nice smile. She is wearing a beautiful peach colored sweater that has a decorative high neck and fancy knitted wrist bands that are buttoned. Her slacks are navy in color. Here are some sections of the interview.

> **Interviewer:** What made you decide to come here?
>
> **Tanya:** At first I didn't want to because I would be missing my friends but then like I was going to have a teacher who I wasn't too fond of and Mom and Dad didn't like that much and Mom and Dad wanted me to come here so—
>
> **Interviewer:** How does this class compare in terms of friends?
>
> **Tanya:** I think I have more friends this time—like our class sort of hangs around together a lot and at our other school we didn't really do that much.
>
> **Interviewer:** What's nice about staying for lunch here?
>
> **Tanya:** Nice about it—well you don't have to worry about getting home and eating and getting back on time—you get to eat with your friends and talk during lunch.
>
> **Interviewer:** What do you talk about?
>
> **Tanya:** [nervously] It's hard to say—just anything.
>
> **Interviewer:** What don't you like about staying for lunch?

Tanya: The food you get—sandwiches, sandwiches, and more sandwiches!

Interviewer: How do you experience the subject matter and activities here?

Tanya: There is not a lot different. In math we kind of get to work at our own rate. Right now we're working on metric and the other subjects are sort of the same but you're not always sitting around being bored. There's stuff to do when you've done something.

* * * * *

Interviewer: What do you find especially nice about having kids your own age to talk to?

Tanya: You can tell them secrets—like, I don't have any brothers or sisters to tell anything to.

Interviewer: What is it about children's secrets that are different such that they will tell other children but that they wouldn't feel comfortable telling adults?

Tanya: Well some of them are about the adults or about other kids that the mother thinks they like or something.

Interviewer: Do your parents make an effort to have kids over for you?

Tanya: Oh, yeah, but it's hard to get friends to come over—it's not as though they live in the same area because not many kids live in Lakeview.

Interviewer: What's most important to you?

Tanya: Well, having lots of friends and having parents who allow you to do things—it's nice to have that. School's fun.

Interviewer: What makes a best friend to you?

Tanya: Being able to trust them—not telling you know.

Tanya's parents wanted her to go to Greenfield School and it wasn't just her decision. She was nervous when I asked her what she and her friends talk about. The idea of secrets came up and the importance of children your own age to share secrets with! Secrets that are about adults are part of the child culture. Friends to Tanya have to be people you can trust not to tell. Tanya could be trusted not to tell me about lunch time topics. She might have been afraid that she would let a secret slip out. I actually detected some critical thinking on Tanya's part when she said that the subject-matter and activities in the actel program are not that much different than the regular program except that you don't get bored because there's always something to do. Maybe the product orientation is a way to ensure that the children are not bored. To fill the time with many tasks and deadlines is a way to keep people too busy to be bored. How much critical thinking and creativity is encouraged in such an atmosphere?

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Giselle is my next visitor. She is perky and blonde and her hair is done in ponytails. She has a Pippi Longstocking appearance but is a real little lady. Even her way of talking is very definite and sweet. Krista is her twin and the two of them dominate the social scene in the classroom. Here are some parts of the interview with Giselle which were especially enlightening.

Interviewer: What do you do at lunch?

Giselle: Well, on the first day of school when we had lunch, the whole class got together in one corner and that was just fun. You know, the boys and the girls mix and it's just great.

Interviewer: What do you talk about at lunch?

Giselle: Well, sometimes we play Truth, Dare, Double Dare or triple dare or quadruple dare.

Interviewer: Now, how do you play that!

Giselle: Well, someone dares someone to do something and—um—the person has to do that and then the person who just did the dare has to dare somebody else.

Interviewer: It could get really kind of—

Giselle: Crazy!

Interviewer: What's the craziest thing that's happened to you or others in this game?

Giselle: I think they had to go up to Mrs. Heavyfoot and say, "I love you, Mommy!" or something like that—something strange.

[Discussion of Mrs. Heavyfoot's name]

Interviewer: What's bad about having to stay for lunch?

Giselle: Nothing really.

Interviewer: What do you think about the activities and subject matter in actel compared to your old school?

Giselle: Well, I like them better because at my old school what we did was—we'd have to do, let's say 2½ pages of work and like we had a test at the same time and everybody started comparing scores and like in math I got three 100% in a row and I set a class record and the boys started calling me hot shots but here if you get three 100%, you just get a pat on the back, you know.

Interviewer: What else is different about the subject matter and activities?

Giselle: Well, I don't know—everybody just seems to be a bit more at ease and I don't know—I just find it to be a bit more of a challenge—and I thought working here would be really, really tough, but it isn't so.

Interviewer: What are your hobbies?

Giselle: I like dancing—jazz dancing. Well this isn't really a hobby but whenever we go out somewhere special, I like doing people's hair up—I do Jan's hair in crowns and I do Krista's hair in French braids.

Interviewer: What is most important in life to you?

Giselle: Mainly being happy and having friends.

Interviewer: What makes you happy?

Giselle: Friends!

Interviewer: What else?

Giselle: Well, if someone congratulates me on something, I feel happy and if I know I've done the best I can.

Interviewer: What makes a good friend?

Giselle: Well just sort of being loyal and sharing mainly the same interests and stuff—like Jan's my best friend and she likes dancing but she's in ballet though. She really likes arts and crafts.

Interviewer: What makes children more comfortable with friends than with adults?

Giselle: Well, because you see them more often like cause we spend nine hours at school and you see them more often and because they're more your own age, you can talk to them better—I think it's mainly just because with your best friends you share mainly the same interests.

* * * * *

Boys and girls do mix at lunch and the game Truth Dare Double Dare sounds risky! Giselle does not find the work in actel tough even though she thought it would be. To be successful in Ms. W's class, it seems that a student must be bright, efficient and a good listener. Are these characteristics seen only in gifted children? The pace is faster and task commitment is demanded of the students in Ms. W's class but most of the subject matter, including math, is at the grade six level. Giselle mentioned that many of her actel classmates do well on tests and they are more at the same level. Many bright but nongifted students do very well on tests consistently. To what extent does Ms. W's program cater to the needs of the gifted? What are the needs of the gifted in this classroom context? So far the children interviewed have consistently mentioned that they have more and better friends in this classroom and that school is fun and challenging rather than boring. I will observe closely in the next four months to identify other ways in which their needs are being met.

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After Giselle, Jeremy is my next visitor. He has red hair and blonde eyebrows and eyelashes. Under his right eye, there is a twitching muscle and he has his feelings very close to the surface. In the interview, Jeremy expressed the same kind of positive feeling towards being in the actel class as did some of his classmates in previous interviews. When he would talk about difficult times with friends in his old school, he would blush and his eyes would become moist. He talked at length about his career choices in the future in this section from the interview:

> **Interviewer:** What do you want to be when you grow up?
>
> **Jeremy:** Well, I'd kind of like to be a dentist—not a doctor because—like—a dentist has to go to as much University as a doctor but they get paid almost as much but as a dentist you're not always dealing with people dying like you are when you're a doctor so I'd kind of like to be a dentist because what really inspired me to be a dentist was when my Dad took me to the orthodontist. My Dad told me that I might have to get six teeth pulled and he got $20.00 for that and then when we go to the dentist I see how people think teeth are really pretty important. I think my Dad would rather have me be a doctor because I say, "You're not always dealing with people dying" but he says "But you're not always dealing with saving lives either"—and he's got a point because it might be nice to say, "This person might not have lived as long as he did if it wasn't for what I did"—but still with the people dying it—I don't think it would probably be worth it because I don't think I could take it. It would probably make you a better person though and if you were a doctor, you'd probably learn to cope.

Jeremy and I return to the room as Dana hands out papers to everyone. Giselle passes by my table and smiles. Ms. W says to me, "Parent-Teacher Night is on Monday, October 3 at 7:30 p.m. if you're free to come."

"I'd like to come," I said, "but would it be something that the parents would like?"

"I'm sure many of them would like to meet you," she replied.

I told her that I would be there. Ms. W leaves the room to make some phone calls and the children are working on math. Andrew checks to see that Ms. W is gone and then gets up and pretends to push Giselle. The noise level is higher than when Ms. W is in the class but I feel quite relaxed because I don't feel that the children are going to try to force me into the role of the teacher. I just sit here and write, listen, and observe. After a few minutes, I walk around the class and chat with the students as I take a look at their work. Ms. W returns and correction of the North Battleford ditto sheets proceeds very quickly and everyone seems to be involved. Near the end of the last sheets, Ms. W says, "I'll leave the fill-in-the-blanks. I'm sure you all got that."

It's a very interesting assumption that all of the children have done the sheets and done them correctly. What other assumptions does Ms. W hold regarding her gifted students? Are the pressures that the children feel in the classroom due to the assumptions held of them by their teacher?

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September 30, 1983

It is a cool and cloudy fall day. The leaves are in full autumn color. I arrive at school at 12:40 p.m. and go to the classroom. Debbie bursts into the room and announces to me, "It's my birthday!" Before bell time at 12:55 p.m., Giselle and Jan approach me and ask if they can talk to me at recess. I agree and notice that Jan looks like she has been crying. Dana comes to me and asks if she can speak to me at recess. I ask, "Is it the same thing as Giselle and Jan are concerned about?"

Dana answers, "No, it's about a dog who was on the schoolground and was picked up by the dogcatcher. We think we should write to Cliff Wright [the mayor] to do something about it!"

Ms. W. asks everyone to sit down for attendance and I wonder how Dana thinks I can help her with the problem of the dogcatcher. The children then leave for band and only Alison, Cole, and Wesley are left. I'll see if I can interview them this afternoon. Alison agrees and our visit proves to be most interesting! Following are some of the interesting parts of our interview.

Interviewer: Who's your best friend?

Alison: Jan.

Interviewer: She seems upset today. I wonder if it has something to do with the dog.

Alison: Well, like, we're all upset about the dog and we want to complain to Mayor Cliff Wright and—but it's something else that Jeremy is spreading around.

Interviewer: I better turn off the tape and find out. They want to talk to me at recess about something. I wonder why they don't talk to Ms. W.

Alison: Because they don't think Ms. W would help. She usually just says, "Stop crying" and like Jeremy is usually a goodie-goodie with the teachers.

Interviewer: I hope he's not hurting Jan's feelings.

Alison: Yeah, he is. She wants to transfer to another school now.

Interviewer: Did this just happen?

Alison: Yeah, just today! Except when we were going to North Battleford, Anthony overheard something than Jan was saying privately to Giselle.

Interviewer: What do your parents think about you being in this program?

Alison: They think it's pretty good but a lot of people tease us. I ride home from school with these people in actel from grade 5 and they used to go to my old school too and were passing these guys from my old school and they said, "How's Greenfield—I heard it was for the dumb kids!"

Interviewer: Do you play the piano, the cello, and the harp?

Alison: Yeah, I'm going to learn to play the harp and I also play the recorder.

Interviewer: Are you talented in music do you think?

Alison: Yes, sort of. I'm in grade nine in cello and in grade 6 in piano.

Interviewer: You do very well then. How much practice time do you spend each day?

Alison: An hour and a half—45 minutes for each instrument.

After the tape is turned off, I learn the nature of Jan's problem. Alison tells me, "On the North Battleford trip, Anthony overheard Jan and Giselle talking and Jan was telling Giselle that she had started her first period. Anthony told Jeremy and now Jeremy is spreading it to all the boys. Jan is so upset that she's talking about switching schools." Now that I know the nature of Jan's problem I am especially interested in hearing what Jan and Giselle have to say at recess.

In the interview with Alison, it was obvious that she is very talented in music. Her parents are providing her with many opportunities to develop this talent. Her cello teacher plays in the symphony and only accepts a certain caliber of student.

Also in the interview Alison indicated that Jeremy is such a goodie-goodie around teachers but that he really isn't such a nice person. I wonder to what degree children behave differently around adults than they do with their peers. Impression management is practised by Jeremy around adults to a degree that Alison finds objectionable. How much impression management is considered to be acceptable by the children?

There is time for one more interview before recess. Cole and I settle ourselves in chairs close to the tape recorder in readiness for our visit. Cole has short, light brown hair and is very tall. He wears a turtleneck sweater and roomy jeans with the pant legs rolled up. His shoes are gray Adidas running shoes. He has a very stiff back and neck and his posture is straight like a ramrod. He has a light complexion and freckles. His enormous hazel eyes always look wide open and his smile is even energized! On his hand he had drawn a hand puppet.

Here are some sections of the interview.

Interviewer: What's different about actel?

Cole: Well, the work is a little bit harder and they challenge kids and actel is academically talented and I really like it here.

Interviewer: Do you like being labeled as gifted?

Cole: Yeah, I like that, but at my old school I seemed smarter because I wasn't in actel.

Interviewer: How is it here with the classmates?

Cole: I seem to like it. I seem to be—umm—I like to be with everybody. Lots of arguments and commotions go on sometimes and I like to be around so I know what's happening but one thing I get called "square" a lot because I don't like rock 'n' roll—I like classical music and I have a lot of different tastes than the other kids.

Interviewer: Like what?

Cole: Well, for one thing, I don't think I'm as strong as some of the other guys and they just like to beat me up.

Interviewer: Who likes to beat you up?

Cole: Patrick—once he said that—he might have just been joking—but he said that he just came up to me—he's away in Guatemala now. I don't mind being called square—it's better than some of the other things I've been called and I wasn't called things like that at my other school because just about everybody liked me there. I seemed to go around with the crowd most of the time and Mrs. Merrill said that there were two girls who just honored the ground I walked on but I didn't know who one of them was but I knew the other one and she's my friend. Andrew's my best friend here.

Interviewer: What would a day at school planned just by you include?

Cole: I wouldn't have math because I don't like math that much. I would probably start off the day with—I think we would have charades because sometimes when half the class is there, we would play charades or seven-up or games like that and I would have probably gym and I would have—I wouldn't have warm-ups—I would just go right to the game I'm not very good at sports and I never play sports except in gym and I would have art for sure because art is my favorite subject.

Interviewer: Is drawing what you do?

Cole: Yeah, drawing is my favorite. That's what I do most of the time and I always draw. Sometimes I draw animals. Sometimes I draw people—most of the time I do people or caricatures of—I did a picture of the Godfather for Greg. He made a deal—he got a puzzle of mine and I said that whichever one he got he could keep but I won it so we made a deal that if I drew him a picture of the Godfather, he'd let me have it.

Interviewer: Oh great—what do you want to be when you grow up?

Cole: I want to be an actor. I really love acting. Once at my old school we were having a class play and I got the main part in the play. I was the poor brother—he had the most lines and once I took a drama class and I enjoyed that. It was kind of fun.

Interviewer: You may be famous and I'll be able to say, "Yes, I knew Cole when he was just in grade six!

Cole: Yeah, that would be my goal as an actor—to get an Academy Award and my Dad asked me what kind of roles I'd like to play and I said any role that I would be offered. He named some and I named Colonel Klink from Hogan's Heroes and I said I'd really like that. He said he was sort of a buffoon and I said it would be sort of fun to sound like that.

Interviewer: What do you think of adults?

Cole: Adults? I like them most of the time and I really like my Mom and Dad. They're really nice to people and I like Mad magazine but my Mom doesn't like me reading them anymore because she said it's not as funny any more and there's more putdowns and, well, one of the reasons I buy it is one of the artist's name is Mark Drucker and he usually does the movie satires and I love his art. I have a bunch of old ones at home and one I really want is from April of '72 so that's when I was born.

Interviewer: What do the other kids in the school think of actels?

> Cole: Well, once I got on the swings and some girls came over and one didn't have a swing and she kept telling me to get off and she started calling me "Ackee" 'cause I was from actel. Some of them didn't really know and they're friendly.

Cole has some difficulty socially and is called a square. His best friend is Andrew who tries to get attention by being a clown. It will be interesting to observe how this friendship evolves.

Back in the classroom it is time for art. Cathy is starting to acknowledge me. She's very shy but knows exactly what is going on. She's the person closest to the door and opens it when people deliver messages. She's tall and slim, wears glasses, and is Chinese. During art, someone finds a poem in a magazine and Ms. W is going to throw it into the garbage. Some students think that it is something naughty and so Ms. W reads it to them to dispel all doubt.

The children seem to get excited and gather into groups to whisper today. Usually they listen carefully to Ms. W but in the lesson today they are more interested in one another's reactions, in socializing and giggling. I wonder if this situation with Jan and Giselle has sensitized all of the girls to the whole exciting area of puberty and of approaching adolescence. Or maybe their excitement this afternoon is due to the fact that Debbie's birthday party is after school.

Recess arrived as did Jan and Giselle at the door of my interviewing room. An entourage of about eight girls surrounds them. Jan and Giselle asked them to leave and a few of them asked, "Is it about you know what?" Jan and Giselle said that it was "personal" but didn't seem to be upset. In fact, they seemed to be enjoying the attention.

When we were alone and seated at a table, I said, "So what can I do for you today girls?"

Jan said to Giselle, "You do the talking."

Giselle started, "Well, we have a problem and we were hoping that you would have some solutions to help us out."

"Well, I don't know if I'll have any solutions but let's see what the problem is," I said.

Giselle explained, "Jan was telling me something very personal and Anthony overheard it and told Jeremy who is blabbing it to everyone and it is really upsetting Jan."

"I just hate him and I'm so embarrassed that he's such a big mouth and I don't know what to do," said Jan.

Both of the girls look at me for my response. "Well, Jan, it's very tough to be in your situation. Did you tell anyone else the personal secret?" I asked.

Jan said "no" but Giselle remembered, "Oh yes you did, Jan, you told Todd."

"Yes, but he's a good friend and wouldn't tell anyone," said Jan.

I realized then that Jan really deserved to be in the dilemma in which she found herself in my opinion because to tell a boy such a personal secret seemed most inappropriate. Then it occurred to me that those were my values and were not necessarily right for Jan. Todd is a most mature, sincere, and trustworthy person and just because he's a boy may not have been an important consideration when Jan wanted to share her secret with her best friends. Todd is one of her best friends and he didn't spread the news. The child culture in this class may be dominated by the children's code of tolerance for and acceptance of others as friends regardless of differences including sex.

Both Jan and Giselle are waiting for the solution to their problem. I begin by saying, "Jan, unfortunately there is not a quick solution to your problem but there is a lesson to be learned I think. You can't stop Jeremy from spreading your personal secret but if I was you, I would ignore him and any others who are embarrassing you and just let time pass. It won't be long and other things of interest will be on everyone's mind. You've learned though that you have to be very careful when you are sharing a personal secret. The people that you tell must be trustworthy and you have to make sure that it's not overheard when you are sharing it. This experience will make you smarter and stronger next time. Another thing that it might have taught you is how to deal with others' personal and private secrets. What would you do if you overheard something personal yourself?

"I wouldn't spread it around to everybody," said Jan. "I'd just tell people I could trust—like Giselle." The girls smile at one another in this shared loyalty.

They thank me and go out for recess and I head for the staff room for coffee. Ms. W gives me directions on how to get to Mrs. S house for the staff party tonight and then the bell rings to end recess.

* * * * *

Karen, who is my next visitor, has short blonde hair, a round face, and a chunky body. She speaks very quickly and before I ask her the first interview question, she asks me how many tapes I needed to buy for these interviews and then she commented, "It must have cost you a fortune for the tapes!"

Here are parts of the interview with Karen.

Interviewer: How did you make the decision to come to Greenfield School?

Karen: I didn't make my decision—my parents said, "Karen, you're going to Greenfield.

Interviewer: What did you say to that?

Karen: I was a little upset because I'm just not the type of person to change things really quickly you know—like, just a couple of days before school starts. "Karen—guess what? You're going to Greenfield instead of your old school." Run that by me again?

Interviewer: Now how do you feel about it?

Karen: I really like it here. The people are all so friendly—like—the kids—it's easy to be friends with all the kids here and like if I tried to be friends with the kids at my old school, just forget it.

Interviewer: Why do you think that was?

Karen: I don't know.

Interviewer: You have more friends here?

Karen: I'm friends with just about anyone in the class.

Interviewer: Do you play with your friends during the weekend?

Karen: Oh definitely!

Interviewer: Like who?

Karen: Well, okay, there's Dana—I've got this big phone list and whenever I'm bored, I call them up to go swimming or to putt 'n' bounce or something.

Interviewer: Who's your best friend?

Karen: That's tough—it used to be Dawn but now like I'm getting to be more hanging around with the other girls like Dana and Krista and Giselle. Like I find Krista and Giselle the popular ones.

Interviewer: What do you think of the boys in your class?

Karen: Well, I don't mind them at all really but I guess they just abide me in the same way!

Interviewer: How do you feel about the subject matter you get here?

Karen: Well in my old school, I'd fall asleep over subjects but Ms. W is always bringing up interesting little subjects.

Interviewer: What do you think about adults?

Karen: They're weird kind of people.

Interviewer: Why?

Karen: I don't know—they're just weird kind of people—difficult and different—hard to understand. Have you ever heard of the old cliché, "I'm doing it just for you?" Sometimes I find that very hard to believe especially when my parents tell me to shut up.

Interviewer: How do you like staying for lunch here?

Karen: I was not really too keen on it because I like to go home and lay on my bed and watch television and now—but—like when you're here, it is all the more time with your friends.

Interviewer: So are you enjoying it?

Karen: Yeah.

Interviewer: What do you do during lunch hour?

Karen: Do you mean while we are eating?

Interviewer: Yes.

Karen: Well, we get together in groups and we talk.

Interviewer: What about?

Karen: Well, today—like that dog that was running out here? Someone called the animal patrol and we were really upset about the three-day limit—like how they kill them after three days and we were trying to think of ideas of how we could get the SPCA to expand it to at least a week.

Interviewer: What did you come up with?

Karen: Well, putting up posters like "Give to the SPCA" because you know it takes money to keep animals around. And then we got this idea—it probably wouldn't work—but getting people to sort of adopt an animal til they could find a home for it like give money and find out about the animal—maybe a picture or something.

Interviewer: They could adopt an animal?

Karen: Yeah, they could visit it and maybe take it for walks. Their only crime as animals is that their owner just neglected them.

Interviewer: If you were describing your school life to a pen pal what would you include?

Karen: Well, I'd tell them that—I don't know if it happens in their country but when something happens here that we find especially interesting or neat we sort of make something called a "fad" out of it and if you follow that fad, people recognize you.

Interviewer: What are the fads right now?

Karen: Well, Care Bears and mini-skirts are coming back—I don't know anything else really.

Interviewer: What's most important in life to you?

Karen: Animals.

Interviewer: Why?

Karen: I don't know—I just like animals. I'm not a people person. I taught my dog to apologize by shaking a paw and now every time I step on his tail by mistake, he apologizes!

Interviewer: Thank for visiting with me.

Although Karen's home doesn't sound like a pleasant place to be, she is very interested in her friends and mentioned that the twins were popular. The idea that if a fad is followed then people recognize you is a way of saying that if you conform to what a group thinks is neat, then you will be recognized. But the struggle between being an individual and a conformist seems to come out when Karen says that she's not a people person. The most important thing in her life in animals.

After Karen, I visit with Wesley who is only nine years old in grade six and mispronounces "just" to sound like "thust." For instance when I asked him how he felt about being in the actel program, he said, "Well, I like it. Some people thust feel jealous because they're not in it and they thust tease people, but I like it."

Following are some interesting sections of the interview with Wesley.

Interviewer: Should lunch be longer?

Wesley: Lunch is long enough. I find some of the time I get a bit lonely because my best friends eat always at home and come five minutes before the bell.

Interviewer: Who are your best friends?

Wesley: Warren and Cole.

Interviewer: What are the good things about staying for lunch?

Wesley: I like eating with David from the nongraded class. He eats in the lunch room.

Interviewer: Do you not eat lunch with other kids from this class?

Wesley: Very rarely because my best friends aren't there and I'm thust not as fond of the other people and they talk about things I'm not interested in.

Interviewer: What do they talk about?

Wesley: Well they—some of the time—they talk about things that they've done that I don't find interesting.

Interviewer: David is thirteen and is mentally retarded. What do you and David do at lunch?

Wesley: Well we mainly eat because he doesn't talk very much 'cause he can't pronounce his words well.

Interviewer: What do you do after lunch?

Wesley: After lunch I go outside and walk around and wait for my friends to come and David helps the caretaker empty the garbages.

Interviewer: What do your parents think of you being in actel?

Wesley: Well I don't think they mind even though it is a long drive every morning and we do have to get up quite early.

Interviewer: So your parents drive every day?

Wesley: Yeah, the bus takes about 45 minutes to get to our house because we have to wait a long time and then you have to transfer at the high school and they always have to pick up hoards of people and everything.

Interviewer: Do you like school?

Wesley: No.

Interviewer: Could you do without school?

Wesley: Well, it might be hard you know because you have to get University to get a job. In order to do well in University, you have to have high school.

Interviewer: What don't you like about school?

Wesley: Well, I thust don't like the work—you know, you often get loaded with work. Another thing I hate is—at our old school you know they don't get nearly as much so you know they always have free time and time off, and I see them all playing outside and I thust wish I could.

Interviewer: What do you think of adults?

Wesley: Well, they're nice and everything but some of the time they can get annoyed. Like when I'm doing my homework, my Mom always interferes and asks me what I'm doing and I thust feel like going into my room and locking the door or something even though I don't have a lock on it.

Wesley is younger than most of the children and does not enjoy most of his classmates socially. It is not surprising then that he doesn't like school as much as some of the other students who find the social aspect of being in this class the most important one. Wesley also feels loaded down with work and wishes he had more time to play. Are

Wesley's reactions to his classmates and the homework influenced by the fact that he is the youngest in the class or are his feelings shared by others to a certain degree? Wesley sounds like one who feels unhappy socially and who feels pressured academically and by his parents at home.

As Wesley left the interview room, Andrew came into his interview smiling. He is tall, dark and has a rascal look about him. He smiles in the classroom when he is attempting to control the dynamics or interactions. The smile is not a friendly relaxed smile. It is a clownish practical-joker smile. He smiles in class when he asks provocative questions. He enjoys the response he gets from his fellow classmates when he puts Ms. W on the spot. For example, the art assignment was based on advertising and Ms. W said, "Do any ad you want from a magazine except for liquor and smoking ads. They are not appropriate for your age."

"But I want to do a liquor or smoking ad," smiled Andrew. "It's important and I think about drinking and smoking all the time."

"You're in pretty rough shape, Andrew, if all that exists for you in life is drinking and smoking!" replies Ms. W.

"But I find them interesting and I want to use one of those ads," said Andrew.

"Not for this assignment, Andrew," states Ms. W.

Andrew looks around with his clownish smile to monitor the reactions of his classmates. I can see that in certain situations, he could be a negative force in the classroom. It's like a battle between a child and an adult. The child tries to gain the attention and support of his or her peers by behaving uncooperatively and if necessary at the expense of the student teacher relationship.

In the interview with Andrew, he said that the actel program was not much different from the regular program except that there were more field trips and activities. Friends were easier to get to know in actel and the whole class ate lunch together. When I asked him, "How do you feel about being identified as an actel person?", he replied, "I wouldn't really mind if I wasn't because I don't think that it's really important to be known as an actel person."

Our visit had just finished when a student knocked on the door and said that it was time for class pictures. It was 3:20 p.m. on a Friday afternoon and pictures were still being taken. It seemed like a hectic way to finish a week. Andrew left for pictures and on my way out of the school, I said goodbye to Ms. W who was in the gym where the photographer was taking individual and class pictures.

* * * * *

Andrew seemed to resist Ms. W's control by using some attention-getting tactics that served as a kind of countercontrol. Are his classmates really impressed with his antics? To what extent is this countercontrol condoned by the children in their child culture? So far I have observed only boys that misbehave and push their limits with Ms. W.

* * * * *

October 3, 1983

It is a grey cool morning and it is humid. My yellow Toyota is covered with black wet dirt and the windows are glazed with an opaque layer of dampness. I arrived at Greenfield School at 8:50 a.m. and carried my tape recorder and notes into the science room where I would conduct my interviews today. The bell rings and Frank joins me for our visit. He's a bright-eyed bespeckled boy with a happy disposition. He's a Dungeons and Dragons player and has invested about one hundred and eighty dollars in the materials. He enjoys his friends and at lunch time, they talk about "video games, movies and latest fads." The most important things in life to him are friends and people who care about him. In the classroom, he feels that being able to learn well is most important and he commented that Ms. W wants him to really care about what he's doing in his work. Although Frank didn't have any really profound insights into his involvement in the actel program, he was very positive and a most pleasant person to interview.

At 9:15 a.m., Lisa joined me. Her dark brown hair was curled tightly and a red hairband kept it back from her face except for the dark and shiny fringe of bangs on her forehead. Beautiful brown eyes looked at me as she spoke. I could see that she wore braces on her teeth.

Lisa and I covered a wide range of topics in the parts of our interview that follow.

Interviewer: Do you stay for lunch? Do you like it?

Lisa: Sometimes, the good part about it is if you're lunch supervisor is nice, you're allowed to sit in large groups and talk but if you get too noisy the lunch supervisor gets upset and sometimes she splits you up.

Interviewer: What's the bad thing about eating lunch here?

Lisa: The bad thing is some of the people are really noisy—sometimes you have to stay in late because of other people. You can't get out even if you've been quiet and the teacher doesn't notice you.

Interviewer: What do you want to be when you grow up?

Lisa: I'm not sure—maybe a doctor, a lawyer or an accountant or maybe to work with computers.

Interviewer: What are your hobbies?

Lisa: I don't really have that many. I like travelling. Last summer I went to Holland, Germany, France, Italy and Switzerland and Denmark.

Interviewer: What meaning does "O Canada" and the Lord's Prayer have for the students?

Lisa: I'm not sure. I don't think that most students think that it has any meaning at all. They just have to do that every day.

Interviewer: Why?

Lisa: Well, for one thing, I think the teacher would like us to do that and another thing I think you're supposed to do that every morning.

Interviewer: What makes life most fun for you?

Lisa: Probably all the interesting things I get to do.

Interviewer: What else? What couldn't you do without in life?

Lisa: My parents, of course.

Interviewer: How do you feel about being identified as bright?

Lisa: Well, some people stereotype bright people as people with glasses and they're geniuses but what really bright is just that your intelligence level for someone your age is a bit over normal.

Interviewer: What does that mean in terms of school?

Lisa: That you should get a little bit more and be pushed a little bit harder.

Interviewer: How do you find activities and subject matter here as compared to your old school?

Lisa: Well, here when we go on field trips, like, we really absorb stuff. At my old school, you don't have to take hardly any notes at all.

Interviewer: What is most important to Ms. W?

Lisa: Well, for one thing, she expects us to be good students and to try to work hard.

Interviewer: What would be most important to her about your school work?

Lisa: She looks for that we're trying our best and not just putting down any old stuff that we want to and that it's neat and that it's in on time.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that would make you a good student?

Lisa: Getting along with our classmates and listening to the teacher.

Interviewer: Now this getting along with classmates—is that an expectation that Ms. W has of you?

Lisa: Yeah, I think so.

* * * * *

Lisa described what Ms. W expected of them and what society seemed to expect of bright people. She defined bright children as those who had a bit more intelligence than the normal child of the same age. The consequence of being bright she felt, was that they should be pushed harder. I wonder if Lisa would consider it the responsibility of the gifted child to assume responsibility for his or her own learning rather than placing the onus on teachers and others outside oneself? In the school atmosphere in which she finds herself, would it even be possible for the children to assume responsibility for their own learning?

At 9:35 a.m. Lisa and I went into the class and Ms. W was teaching spelling. Three ditto sheets had been handed out and were to be completed by the students after the lesson in which Ms. W taught when to double the last consonant of a word and when this should not be done.

I set up the interview schedule for the week and said goodbye for the morning.

I returned for Parent Teacher Night at 7:30 p.m. and had a chance to meet the parents with their children. Shea's parents wanted to know, "Are the upheavals between the boys and girls really all that bad?"

I replied, "The children work very cooperatively in class but every once in a while I see some girls with reddened eyes from crying. However, there are some girls who will cry in sympathy over a friend's problem."

Shea's Mom asks, "Are the boys really that awful to the girls?"

I realize at this point that Shea has been telling her parents about conflicts between the boys and girls and this clues me into the possibility that there might be a good deal of dissension beneath the surface of the cooperative happy impression portrayed by Ms. W's class.

I visited with Ed's parents and met a number of others. All of the teachers, students and parents were called to the gym where the Principal introduced the teachers to the parents. Later, she apologized to me for not introducing me but I told her that I did not want to be thought of as a teacher by the students and so was happy not to be introduced as part of the staff.

I went to get my coat in the staff room and to say goodbye to Ms. W. I found her talking to Mrs. S. and she was saying that Clayton's mother had said that he was not working as hard as his brother had in the actel program and was not producing. She felt that the program was not challenging him. Ms. W was so hurt and insulted and angry that she didn't know what do do! Ms. W said to me, "You're sure going to hear an earful when I talk to Clayton tomorrow! I'm going to tell him what his Mother said and then I might just ask him what he's going to do to relieve his boredom!" As I leave I realize what tremendous pressure Ms. W can be subjected to by dissatisfied parents!

* * * * *

October 4, 1985

I arrive at school at 8:50 a.m. on this damp morning that is gray and chilly. The bell rings and Ed and I go to the science room for our interview. Ed is a bright-eyed, smooth-skinned brunette with a lovely personality. He is dressed in a gray and burgundy sweatshirt and looks clean and neat. He said that his voice sounds awful on a tape and I told him that mine doesn't sound great either. With that, we begin the interview that I found to be most informative.

> **Interviewer:** Is this class different from other groups you've been in?
>
> **Ed:** Yes, because—like—it's one class. There are little groups most of the time but—like—when we do class things we're a class. We're all together.
>
> **Interviewer:** What are some class things you do?
>
> **Ed:** Well, we go on trips together—like, we've been to MacDonald's before and we've gone bowling before as a class and just in class when we're doing projects and stuff we're all favoring other people's things and saying how good they are and everyone's a class. They like the other people.
>
> **Interviewer:** What subjects do you like the best?

Ed: Well, I like math 'cause last year we got to work at our own pace and it was really good. Like we wouldn't get pressured to get work done or we didn't move too slow.

Interviewer: Do you find the pressure to get work done exists quite a bit for you?

Ed: Last year it did because last year, I had never done a lot of reports and hard work and it was a challenge last year but I've sort of come over that now. It comes easier for me.

Interviewer: What's most important to Ms. W in class?

Ed: I think she thinks that we should all have good behavior or she says herself that we're mature kids so we should act mature.

Interviewer: What else does she expect of you?

Ed: To get our work done—neat, clean and put thought into it.

Interviewer: Do you find deadlines helpful or are they a hindrance?

Ed: They're helpful I guess because like usually if there wasn't a deadline, like you keep putting it off—one day more—right? But with a deadline it has to be done so I sort of work better under pressure. If there's a day to be done, I try to get it done.

Interviewer: What are your hobbies Ed?

Ed: Well, I started collecting coins and, well, I don't have a really specific hobby that I'm really into yet. I play the piano and tenor saxophone—I just started that and it's pretty big for me still. I like doing things by myself a lot like these TSR fantasy games I like a lot to play with. TSR is a group that makes Dungeons and Dragons and other fantasy games.

Interviewer: What do you want to be when you grow up, Ed?

Ed: A lawyer.

Interviewer: Why?

Ed: Well one—the thing about helping innocent people so they don't have to get locked up or anything and also I like the idea of digging in to find out what's happening—like when I was in Ontario, I was watching the Perry Mason Show and I like doing things like that and I also—if there's a judge position that comes up that I like, I'll take that after a few years of being a lawyer. I like doing that stuff too.

Interviewer: I want to know what's most important in life to you.

Ed: My religion is important to me being Jewish and keeping the customs that my family has kept with us and achieving the best things I can in life. Like if there's a thing I'm doing and I want to do it, I'll get it done and good—that's what I want.

Interviewer: What makes the classroom experience what it is for you?

Ed: All the kids—how different they are—they're all one united class and they're all very nice—you don't see much put downs in this class.

Interviewer: No, you don't. Does this mean they're not individuals?

Ed: Oh, they are very much. Let's say you're working on a project—everyone has their own idea—like—I haven't once seen anyone copy anything in this class—everyone is very good at putting their ideas down on a piece of paper but when it comes to being a class, we're a class.

Interviewer: What do you think about boys and girls being friends in class?

Ed: There's a few people who sometimes get put down because they're not quite like everyone else. They stick with their group—but usually we're all together and those people—like they do have good ideas of themselves too—they're very good at things just like everybody else.

Interviewer: Do you think there's a problem with boys and girls being friends? It doesn't seem to happen that often does it?

Ed: In our class, it does. Everybody's friends and no one puts down anyone for that. Everybody's friends.

Interviewer: When would you discuss things with this big group?

Ed: In the morning when we come in, everyone is talking and after big trips or after we've done a big project in school like last year we did the case of Louis Riel and I changed history. I love doing things like that so they're basically all together talking about what happened and like boys, girls, everybody.

Interviewer: How is it that you accept boys' and girls' friendship equally while others don't?

Ed: I think it has something to do with my intelligence. I'm not trying to brag or anything but I know what—like that I'm sort of intelligent and it also has something to do with religion and everybody is good and I know that everyone has something special about them and everyone's a good person.

Interviewer: Do you like being labeled gifted?

Ed: Well, it's not really the label but the things people think of you. People think you are a good person for it but then again some people say, "Oh, he's gifted—I don't want to have anything to do with him." Some other kids who aren't in these gifted programs think, "He's probably no good because he's in the gifted class."

Interviewer: To be gifted does this mean there are a lot of expectations put on you by others?

Ed: I think sometimes people expect more from us that we should be more mature than other kids but usually we get to do more interesting stuff. Like when we do spelling, not only do we just have our spelling test with all the words and copying them down, we learn something pretty interesting about how the word originated from Latin or Greek or something. It's not just more dfficult, it's more interesting.

Interviewer: Do you think you need the structure of school to learn or could you learn just as well somewhere else?

Ed: Well, I guess I could learn if I had the books I could learn on my own. I'd need help from someone but also the day in school—there are periods—so you know when to get things done by. It's all organized so you don't really put things off. Like, let's say you're doing it at home in a day you might only work in the morning and have the whole afternoon off but like here the time is set and that's what you work for and it's done. I don't really mind the school hours because like I don't say for more summer vacation because school hours are school hours and it's fine.

Interviewer: Do you like school?

Ed: Yes, very much, very much.

Interviewer: Do you have much homework?

Ed: It depends—like last year I had a lot of homework 'cause we did lots of new reports and stuff and this year we have lots of homework but it depends on the day.

Interviewer: How much time a day on the average do you spend?

Ed: It really depends—on the average—an hour and a half a day. Like you see, some days we have no homework and some days we have two projects to finish which is going to take us four hours on the weekend or something. Like I've worked eight hours on a weekend catching up on work one time but then the week after, you don't get so much homework. It all evens out eventually.

Interviewer: You seem to be a very happy, positive person. Have you always been like this?

Ed: I guess so. Last year, like, I had some depressing times because it was the first time doing really hard work and lots of homework and stuff and I thought, "Oh, gee, I used to be smarter than this because now it's hard for me to do work." Like, I thought I was smarter then, and then this year, I was really thinking and it's not—I've got a lot wiser coming to this class. It's a different type of work—it's more time consuming but it's more interesting too—more of a challenge.

Interviewer: How do you feel about last year?

Ed: Last year I easily could have had a nervous breakdown sometime but I got through it!

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To Ed, the positive social feeling in the class seems to be most important to him. He is proud of the way that they get along and enjoy one another's company. It was interesting that the choice of pace in math was helpful to Ed mainly because he did not feel pressured. He felt very pressured last year and said that he could have had a nervous breakdown! Ed thought that to be labelled gifted meant that more was expected of him but the work was more interesting.

* * * * *

After visiting with Ed, Clayton joins me. It is 9:15 a.m. as Clayton settles himself into a chair near the tape recorder. He is chubby, has blonde hair and wears glasses. It was his mother who felt that he was bored in school, but when I asked him how he felt about the actel program, he was most positive. Many of his responses to the interview questions were short and added nothing new. We went back to class at 9:30 a.m. and the children were setting up their weights for a measuring lab. Jason was saying to Todd, "What's for homework? Why don't we just erase this homework board?"

Karen comes to my table in the back of the room and shows me her ad about how to cure warts. She explained, "The man is burying the potato when there is a full moon because that's supposed to cure warts." She had done an interesting illustration.

After recess at 11:00 a.m., Sherry was waiting for me in the science room ready for our visit. She is so talkative with her friends and quite loudly sociable that I was surprised when she was shy and very quiet with me. The interview was enjoyable to conduct because Sherry was willing to share her ideas.

Interviewer: What are the advantages of coming to Greenfield?

Sherry: Well, all of the people here are sort of at the same level and so you won't be kept back along with the other people or it might be too difficult or something and all of the people here are real nice and we have a whole bunch of field trips.

Interviewer: How do you find the activities and curriculum compared to other schools you've been in?

Sherry: Well, the activities are much better. Like at the French School they went on maybe 2 or 3 fieldtrips a year and here we go on seven. In math you can go at your own pace—you don't have to go—okay—now you have to do this one page—you can't go past it. Like here, you just take the book and do as much as you can and you take the test at different times and when you're done, you don't have to do a different subject. You can go on to the next grade and that.

Interviewer: What are your favourite subjects?

Sherry: Gym is my very favourite and my second is math and art.

Interviewer: Do you like being considered bright?

Sherry: Well sometimes—I like being considered intelligent but I don't like people considering me a snob for being in the actel or something.

Interviewer: When does that happen?

Sherry: Some of the people in Mrs. S's class considered the people in actel snobs. I'm not sure why.

Interviewer: What do you want to be when you grow up?

Sherry: I really want to be an astronaut but if I can't make it as an astronaut, I might have something to do with news reporting or something 'cause I'm also taking Chinese lessons. I've always been interested in China and I've been taking Chinese lessons for the last three years. I have a really nice teacher—she gives me snacks and everything.

Interviewer: What's most important in life to you?

Sherry: Well, what makes me happy is if I can do something good for someone or if they do something good for me because I've done something good for them and what makes me really happy is they call me over all the time and then I know that they like me. Sports are important too. I like baseball and my best sport is basketball. I love soccer and a whole bunch of things.

Interviewer: What's important to Ms. W in class?

Sherry: She doesn't consider the work incredibly important. She wants us to get along with the class and to use our work time.

Interviewer: What does she expect in your assignments?

Sherry: Well, she usually makes it out of 20 points or something then she'll see if it's done on time; if it meets up to the requirements and neatness—neatness is very important.

Interviewer: What happens when boys and girls play games together?

Sherry: Well, in other schools, if you make a mistake, the boys will yell at you and say that girls can't—aren't nearly as good as boys, and if a boy makes a mistake, they won't mind. But here they say, "Nice try," and stuff.

Interviewer: What would you miss most about being with your friends at lunch?

Sherry: At lunch we always pretend that we're something—it's kind of hard to explain—and there's always something funny—like someone spills something or takes someone's lunch or something.

Interviewer: What is the disadvantage of eating lunch here?

Sherry: You can't watch television at noon.

Interviewer: Do you watch much television?

Sherry: I used to watch a lot until my parents—now they won't allow me to watch television until Friday, Saturday and Sunday and then just two hours a day. I'd rather watch just one show on week days and then like I barely watch television on the weekends except—I didn't used to but now I do because that's the only time I can watch it. Like, I like Three's Company—that's my favorite show and that's only on weekdays and Friday the one day I can watch it, I have ballet. So I can never watch it unless if I'm babysitting my brother I get to watch television because there's nothing to do.

Interviewer: What do you think of adults?

Sherry: Well, usually nice, but sometimes too strict and well intelligent also and creative. Like they think of good places to go and fun things to do.

Sherry has a talent for languages and speaks French, Chinese and English. Her parents arrange for her to have private lessons in Chinese, and her mother teaches French in the school and speaks it fluently. When questioned about her assignments for Ms. W, Sherry emphasized the importance of having them done on time and done neatly in order to get a good mark. She thought that the boys in this class were more fair to the girls when they played sports together. Another social time that was especially enjoyable for Sherry was lunch time where there was always something funny happening.

Although the actel program is meant to help gifted children develop their talents, some of these talents cannot be developed in the schools. For example, Sherry has a talent for languages. French is taught in the schools but she must take private Chinese lessons if she wants to learn Chinese. I wonder how many gifted children have talents that are not being developed either in school or after school. What responsibility does the school have to identify a gifted student's areas of greatest potential and to tailor the program in school and to suggest after school learning experiences that would facilitate the development of potential?

* * * * *

October 5, 1983

Today is sunny and crisp. The bell rings at 8:55 a.m. and Daryl and I settle in for our visit in the science room. Daryl has just had braces put on his teeth and seems preoccupied with this event. His answers tell me that he is not in the mood to be informative or sociable. It is a frustrating interview for me because Daryl was tense and his answers were very short. He would often answer a question with, "I don't know." The only time that the words flow is when I ask him about his braces. He is concerned about brushing his teeth at lunch five minutes after he eats. The lunch supervisor will not let him leave and he is uncomfortable about getting her special permission but is equally uncomfortable about not brushing promptly. We return to the room at 9:15 a.m. and Joey and I go back to the science room for our interview.

Joey has dark hair and a pleasant social manner. Here are some parts of our conversation.

> **Interviewer:** What's the advantage to being here?
>
> **Joey:** I don't know—it's a little more challenging and you get to go on a lot more trips. At my other school there wasn't any non-graded so here we're working with nongraded and that and you get used to them so if you see someone on the street, you won't go like this—[shows surprise]—just staring at them.
>
> **Interviewer:** Would it work for you to do work in whatever order and at your own pace?
>
> **Joey:** Yeah, I think it would work for anyone but, like, if it was that way, you might not work as hard because you might think, "Oh if I get all this done well then I'll have all this free time to read or, you know, whatever.
>
> **Interviewer:** Do you read quite a bit?
>
> **Joey:** Yeah, I like reading—mysteries, thrillers.
>
> **Interviewer:** What makes you look forward to coming to school?
>
> **Joey:** Friends and getting good marks I guess.

Joey and I return to the classroom in time to line up to go to another classroom for French. I had asked the French teacher earlier if I could observe in her class and she had said yes. The children are doing a French crossword puzzle and can use a French dictionary to help them. They are restless and noisy and the empty desks give off a hollow tin sound as the children swing their feet and hit the desk legs. There is much chatting and Jason is being rude. The French teacher said, "Jason, that's the third time I've had to talk to you!" Clayton and Cory are sharing a joke and are giggling. Tanya turns around in her desk to talk to Cathy. Finally, the children are asked to turn to their workbooks for corrections. They are still noisy but a little more attentive during corrections. Cole is purposely making noises in his desk. Ms. M, the French teacher, asks the children to say the word "donc" once. Cole says it twice. Ms. S says, "Just once Cole." Cole smiles and looks around for reactions from other students. He doesn't even have his workbook open as the answers are being given—another attention-getting technique, I think.

Recess follows and after recess, I visit with Judy. She is a tall blonde girl who is very nervous and speaks with a slight English accent. Following are some sections of the interview.

> Interviewer: Judy, you have just come into the actel program in the last month or so. Now how are you finding it?
>
> Judy: I'm finding it fine. There are a lot more field trips than there are in the other one and I find it's a lot easier to get along in the actel—I don't know—it's probably because they don't have friends in other classrooms. Well, they're more togetherish and there's less bullies. There aren't any bullies.
>
> Interviewer: What did your parents think about your coming into actel?

Judy: They were pleased. I think they felt I'd have a chance to have a good time and I wasn't getting on very well in the other class. I didn't have very many friends and the teacher talked too fast and wrote too fast.

Interviewer: What other activities are you involved in?

Judy: Well, I play with the boy next door sometimes. Quite often I just sit there and think.

Interviewer: What do you think about? What's your favorite thought?

Judy: Me and, well, the way the world's getting on—like the way it's going bonkers.

Interviewer: When you sit and think about yourself what are the kinds of things you think about?

Judy: Well, how I'm possibly going to live in the future with all the pollution and adult things we haven't imagined yet—like before cars were mass produced, no one would have imagined pollution or traffic jams or highway accidents and I think about what happens to people after they die.

The interviews today, October 5, were interesting for a variety of reasons. Daryl was preoccupied with his braces and the fact that the lunch supervisor would not let him brush within five minutes after lunch. Daryl not only is in a very controlled environment in the classroom but is also subjected to more control by the lunch supervisor over the noon hour. The pressure seems constant.

Joey mentioned that one of the advantages of being in the actel program was that he could work with the non-graded students and so would not be threatened by handicapped people when he saw them in public. He also felt that a work schedule was helpful in school because if he had free time, he might just spend his time reading." Reading is usually considered to be foundational to most learning and yet because Joey enjoys it, he seems to suggest that this would not be the best way to spend his free time in school!

Judy had just joined the actel class and feels less threatened by bullies and more accepted by her new classmates. When she says that the actel children do not have friends in other classes and that they stick together, it confirms what the children have been saying in the interviews. Judy worries about the future and the way that the world has gone "bonkers." If being gifted makes Judy more aware of the world situation than those who are not gifted, she would worry a great deal. What is the responsibility of the school to prepare students for the future and to allow them to feel empowered to make a difference in a positive way in this world?

* * * * *

October 7, 1983

I have been a participant observer in Ms. W's class for five weeks now, and I will finish my first set of interviews today by visiting with Warren, Donna, and Cathy. It is 8:40 a.m. and I am on outside supervision to cover for Ms. W. Some of the students from her class are playing four-square on the tarmac and yell, "Hi, Mrs. Van Hesteren" in chorus. The bell rings at 8:55 a.m. and Warren and Cole walk into the school with me. Cole asks, "Is it true that you are going to play these tapes in front of the class?" He was probably baiting me and he did a good job! "Of course not Cole! Where would you ever get an idea like that?" I replied.

"Oh, I don't know. I just thought you were going to play them for the class," said Cole. Warren was with us and was my next interview. I think that Cole was enjoying teasing Warren this way and possibly making him uncomfortable about the interview with me. I assure Warren and Cole that the tapes are very confidential. I wonder if other children in the class share the concern about the use of the interview tapes? I asked Ms. W if I could talk to the class briefly, and I assure the children that the information on the tapes was confidential. Warren and I leave for our interview.

Warren is an individual thinker with a bit of a whine in his voice. He looks pretty grubby most of the time which makes him different than his classmates. He wears t-shirts and pants that are of a dirty green or camel color. He is not dirty but his clothes are cheap and old looking and they fit poorly. We have to move a number of times during the interview but Warren seems to enjoy it and to relax.

Here are some of his comments on adults and on noon games.

Interviewer: What do you think of adults? What makes them different than kids?

Warren: Well, they're bigger. They know more.

Interviewer: What's good about being an adult?

Warren: You can do almost anything you want to do.

Interviewer: What's bad about being an adult?

Warren: You've got a shorter life to live. Adults have more of a responsibility because if kids have a dog, they have to take care of this dog but, like, parents have to take care of kids and a dog.

Interviewer: What kind of games do you like to play when you come back to school at noon?

Warren: Well, outside my friend and I usually spy on people—Wesley and I spy.

* * * * *

Warren and his friend Wesley are not included socially with their classmates mostly because they seem to prefer to be alone. It is interesting that as relative social outsiders, they would choose to play the game "I Spy"! Spies are often outsiders looking in.

* * * * *

Warren goes back to the classroom and Donna joins me. We had a short but pleasant visit. Two of her comments are interesting and follow.

Interviewer: What's most important to Ms. W?

Donna: She expects us to do our best and, like the Principal said last night, she's a health nut. She's very interested in physical fitness.

Interviewer: If you could have one wish, what would it be?

Donna: No war—I hope we don't have nuclear war.

After Donna left, Cathy entered and would be the last person in her class to be interviewed. She has shoulder length black hair and is a tall, slim Chinese girl. Cathy wears glasses and although she is very shy, her comments are blunt and to the point. Here is what she had to say.

Interviewer: How do friends here compare to your old school?

Cathy: I think they're a lot better, kind of because when I left Grosvenor, my friends back there kind of dumped me.

Interviewer: Why?

Cathy: Probably because I was in actel.

Interviewer: What is staying for lunch like?

Cathy: Well, you get into groups and then you talk about things.

Interviewer: What do you usually talk about?

Cathy: Well, sometimes they're pretty dirty stuff.

Interviewer: What kinds of games do you play at lunch?

Cathy: Well, right now we're playing four-square and before-me, Sherry, Lisa and Shea used to play on the tire swing and sometimes we have a skipping season and we start skipping.

* * * * *

Cathy said that her old friends dumped her when she entered Greenfield School. In the decision to enter the actel program, most of the students mentioned that it was a risk because they would leave old friends and had no guarantee of gaining new friends. Many of them did not have friends in their old neighborhood anymore and did not feel comfortable around people from their old schools. It seems that the children experience a kind of tension when they live in a neighborhood where many of them have become distanced from old friends or have no friends. Their new friends in the actel class became very important to them especially if old friends have "dumped" them as in Cathy's case.

The lunch time conversation that Cathy said was about "pretty dirty stuff" clued me into the interest and concern that children this age have regarding sexual matters, puberty, and growing up. How do children experience growing up as individuals and as group members? What does the term "pretty dirty stuff" include and how important is it to the children in the classroom context?

The Guiding Themes

After being a participant observer in this class of gifted children for five weeks, certain themes that represent the meaning of the classroom experience to the children begin to take form. The four emerging themes include (1) the social life of the children in the actel class; (2) the curricular experiences; (3) the pressures and expectations felt by the gifted students; and (4) the tensions and conflicts experienced as a result of being in the actel program.

The social life of the actel students revolves around the friendships formed with their actel classmates. Most of the children see their class as an accepting and tolerant group. As Ed said, "You don't see many put downs in this class!" Even children who have friends of the opposite sex are usually accepted. The social cohesiveness of the actel children is strengthened as a reaction to their social exclusion by some of the children in the regular program. Recess is a time to be with friends outside, playing four-square, swinging on the tire swings, or skipping. At lunch, the children visit and play cards or Truth Dare Double Dare while they eat. Sherry enjoys eating lunch at school because she says that there's always something funny happening. Tanya likes friends whom she can trust to keep secrets but Cathy thinks that her conversations with classmates could be improved because they talk about "pretty dirty stuff." Conflicts and fights do occur as was seen in Jan and Giselle's situation where Jeremy was telling Jan's personal secret. The struggle that some of the students mentioned was between being an individual and being part of the group. Dana suggested that sometimes the cost of popularity is too high.

Although the curricular theme is important to the children, it is usually not considered to be as important as having friends and being accepted socially. Most of the children felt that the program was especially good because Ms. W arranged so many field trips for them and because her program was not just more difficult but more challenging. While they may have been bored when they were in the regular program, the children say that they are never bored in Ms. W's class. There are no textbooks used in most subject areas and there is even a chance to work at one's own speed when doing math work schedules. The children must be well organized and good listeners in order to keep up with the pace set by Ms. W. Because there are no textbooks and few workbooks, there are many ditto sheets handed out daily that must be put into folders and duo-tangs in the proper order. There is a timetable that is followed, usually to the minute. The students are expected to use their time efficiently and to be productive. Good marks are very important to the students and Ms. W spends many hours each day evaluating the children's work. The students are very aware that doing well in school is necessary in order to go to University and to have a career in the future.

The pressures that the children experience in the classroom and the degree to which they conform to the pressures and demands is the third theme that became apparent. Gifted children who enter the actel program are expected to be successful by their parents, by their teachers, and by themselves. The teacher sets the standards to which the children must conform, in order to be successful and to continue to be part of this special class. They are expected to be exemplary students both academically and socially. There are some students who actually resist conforming to the exemplary standard of behavior demanded by the teacher. They exercise countercontrol by behaving in obnoxious and uncooperative ways. They often look for support for their behavior from their peers. For example, when Andrew asks provocative questions to put Ms. W off balance, he looks around the classroom with a smile on his face to see what reactions he is getting from his classmates. It is almost as if the children are exerting pressure on the adults because the adults pressure the children and try to control their behavior. Some children seem to conform to the expectations almost totally. Others are probably somewhere between the resisters and those who seem to be complete conformists.

The fourth theme is the tensions experienced by the children and the conflicts as a result of being in the actel program, as well as tensions experienced by them more generally. Most of them must leave old friends in their neighborhoods in order to join the actel program. Each day they return to their old neighborhoods where often their old friends have deserted them and this creates tension for some. When at school, the tension that is part of being in the program for the gifted is that some of the children in the regular classes exclude actel children from games and other social events. This tension was mentioned in the earlier discussion concerning the social theme because it is a social reality as well as a tension that the children must live with. The tensions experienced more generally demand that the children make decisions regarding how much they will conform to group pressure and how much they will be individuals not only in the social context as mentioned earlier but also in curricular situations. Another tension or conflict is the one produced when adults attempt to control the children who then use a kind of countercontrol as a way of dealing with the pressure. The tension is a result of the pressure to conform to adult standards. There are other ways including impression management that the children as a group deal with the controls and pressures imposed on them by adults. A consideration of the lived experience of being gifted children in an adult world is part of the tension theme to be discussed.

Although the themes are interdependent and therefore overlap, each of the four guiding themes are considered separately for purposes of better understanding the scope and depth of the children's lived experience in the classroom context.

VI. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUIDING THEMES

INTRODUCTION

The guiding themes that emerged from the observations and interviews in the classroom in the first five weeks include: (1) The social life of the children in the actel class; (2) Expectations and pressure experienced by the children; (3) Curricular activities; and (4) Tensions and conflicts. The purpose of this chapter is to use these themes as a way to focus on the data collected over the next four months in the classroom and to develop the depth and scope of each theme in a way that will promote a better understanding of the experience of the students.

The sources of information include the journal notes that I wrote as a participant observer, the children's illustrations depicting their lives in the actel class, the interviews that I had with parents of four of the students, the second set of student interviews, and the letters sent to me by the children after the completion of my time in the classroom. The interview questions that I asked the children in the second set of interviews are found in Appendix B. In addition, a documentary analysis will be made of the November 1982 report card that was used to evaluate the progress of the gifted students in Ms. W's class.

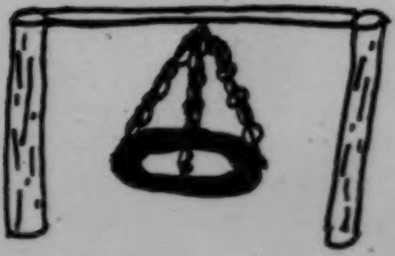
I asked the children to illustrate their school experience on a piece of blank white paper, using a black felt pen. The following pages contain nine of the illustrations that serve as a pictorial representation of the four guiding themes that will be developed further.

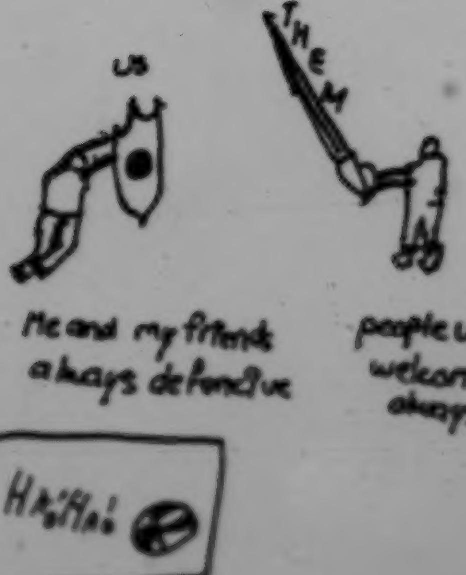
The importance of the children's social life in the classroom context is expressed in the illustrations in their repeated reference to friends and friendship. The tire swing represents the class hangout and one student feels that being funny or good at sports is what is needed to be well liked.

The expectations and pressures that the children feel in the actel class present them with ups and downs. The unpredictability of the ups and downs is a concern and is expressed in three different ways in the illustrations: (1) Sometimes you feel like a hero, sometimes you can't wait for it to end; (2) In school you are always trying your best but sometimes it's like being blown up; and (3) Lots of my experiences at school have been bright and cheerful, but some have shattered my life temporarily.

The curricular theme is one that is foundational to the program for the academically talented. In the illustrations, the children refer to the curriculum as work, and attribute to the curriculum an increase in their vocabulary and their appreciation of school. The expectations and pressures experienced by the children are

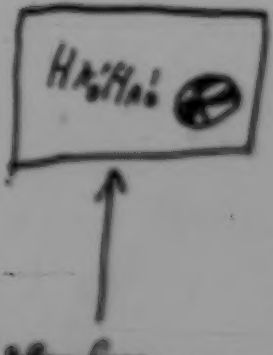
Class
Hangout



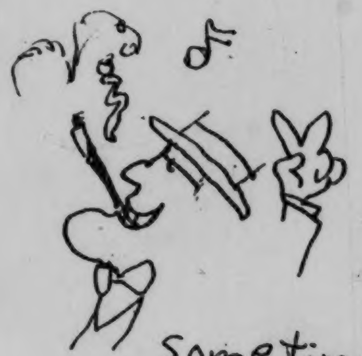


Me and my friends
always defensive

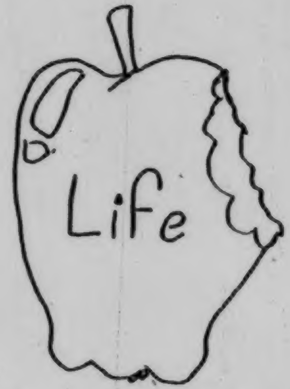
people who don't
welcome us
always offensive

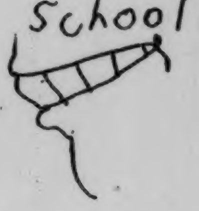


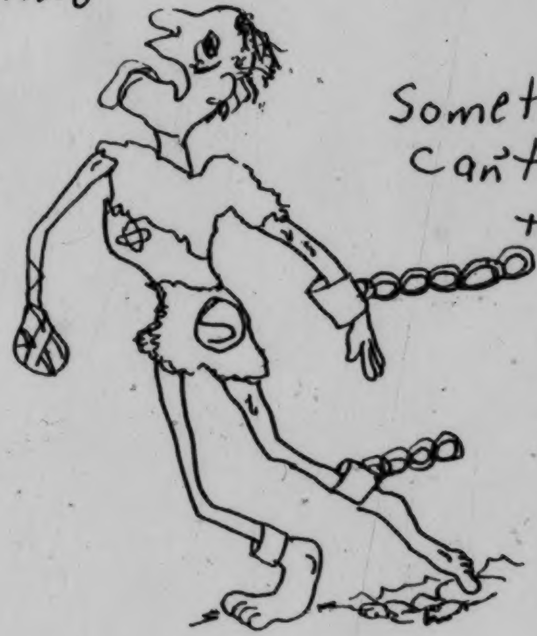
Being funny or
good at sports
make yourself
liked



Sometimes
you feel
like a hero



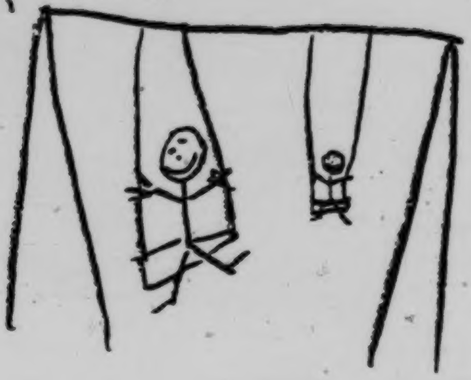




Sometimes you
can't wait for it
to end

school is a big part of
life.

1.



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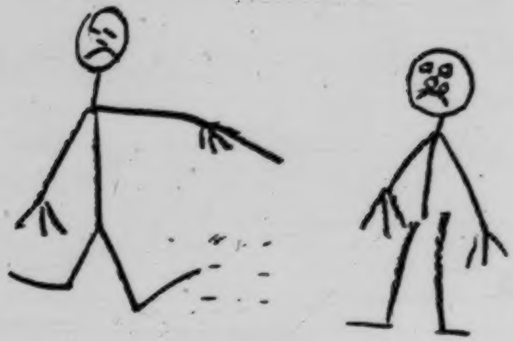

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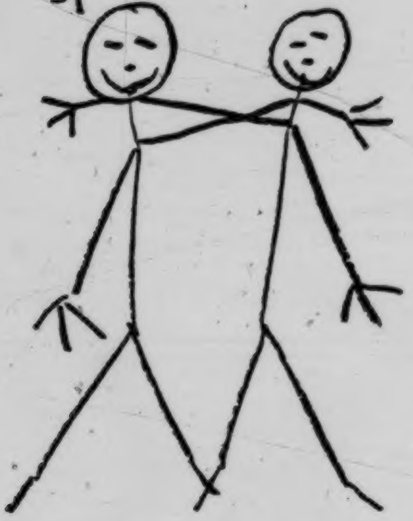

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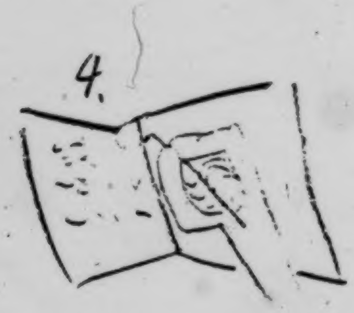
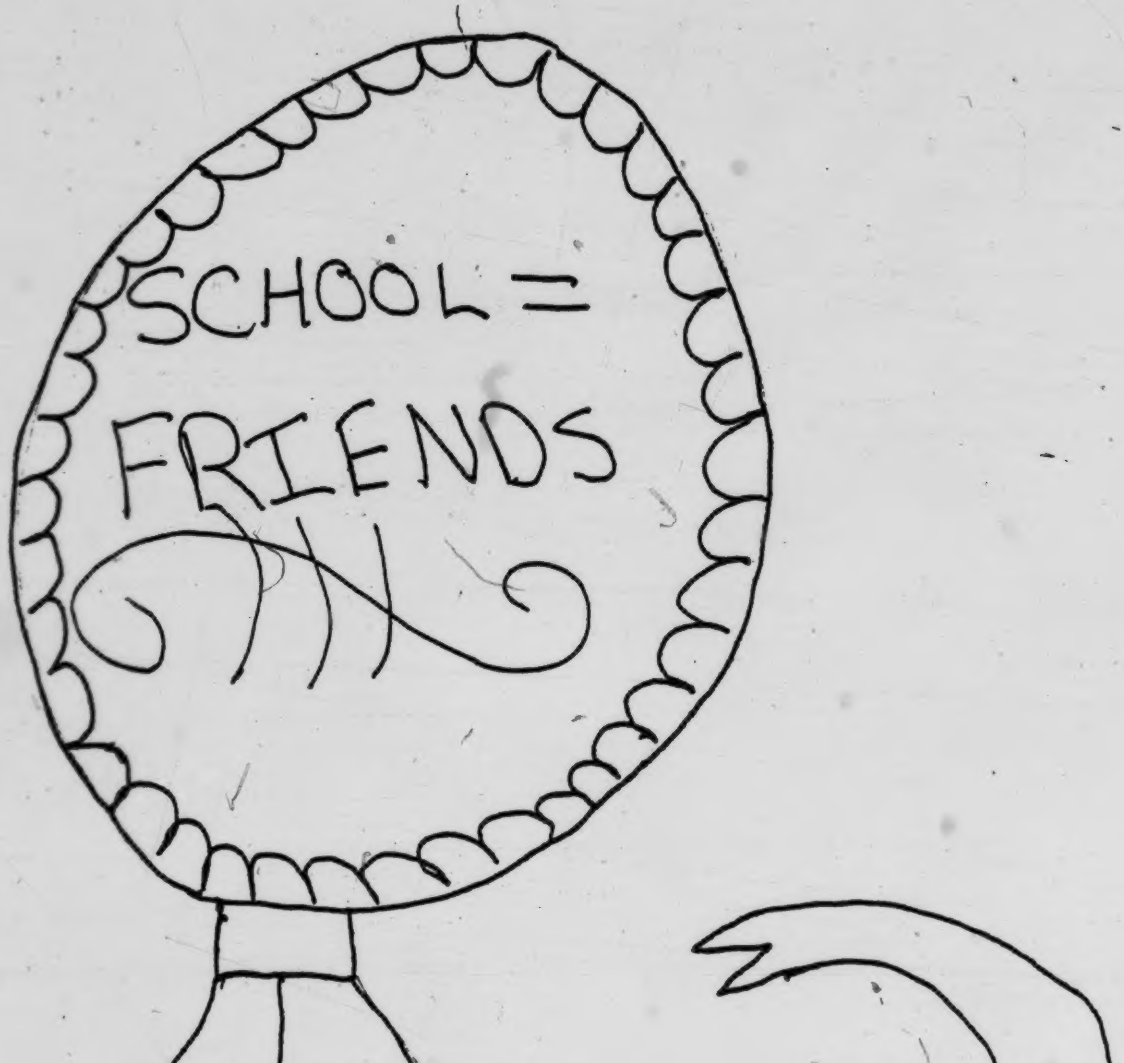
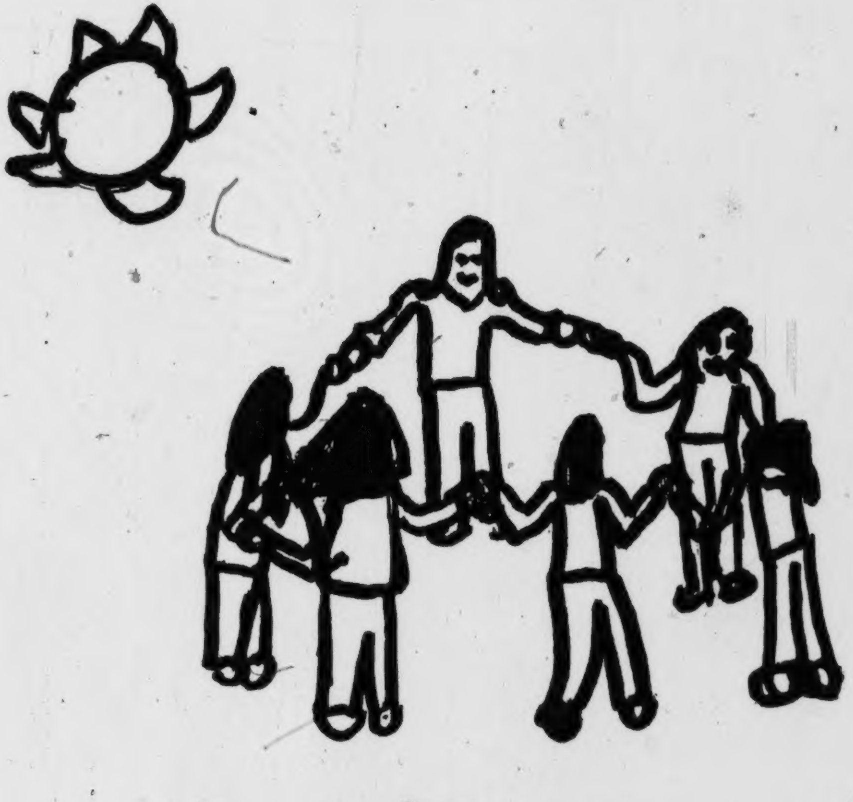


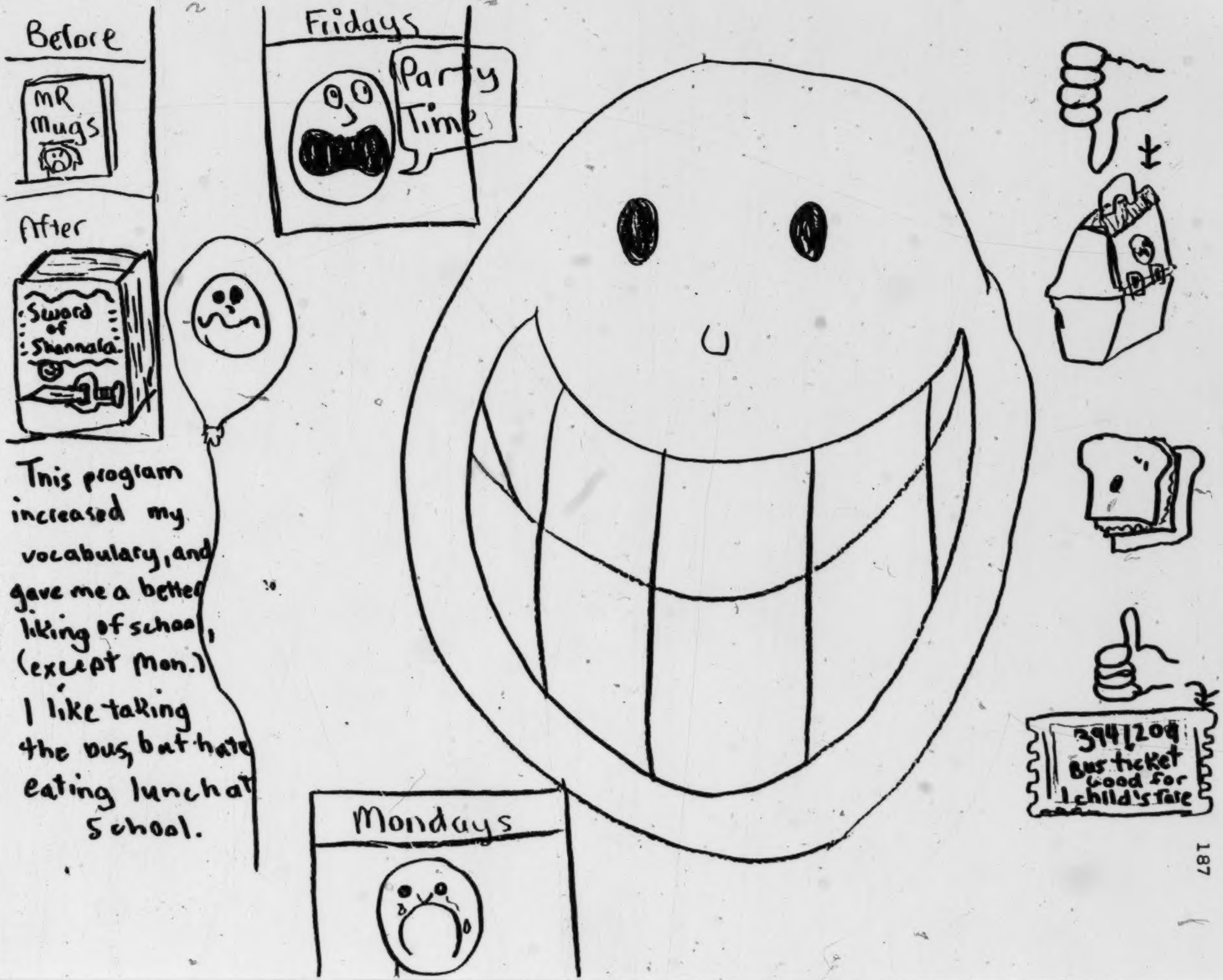
1. Fun
2. Enemies
3. Friends-Ben & I
4. Work


SCHOOL =
FRIENDS
SCHOOL=FRIENDS

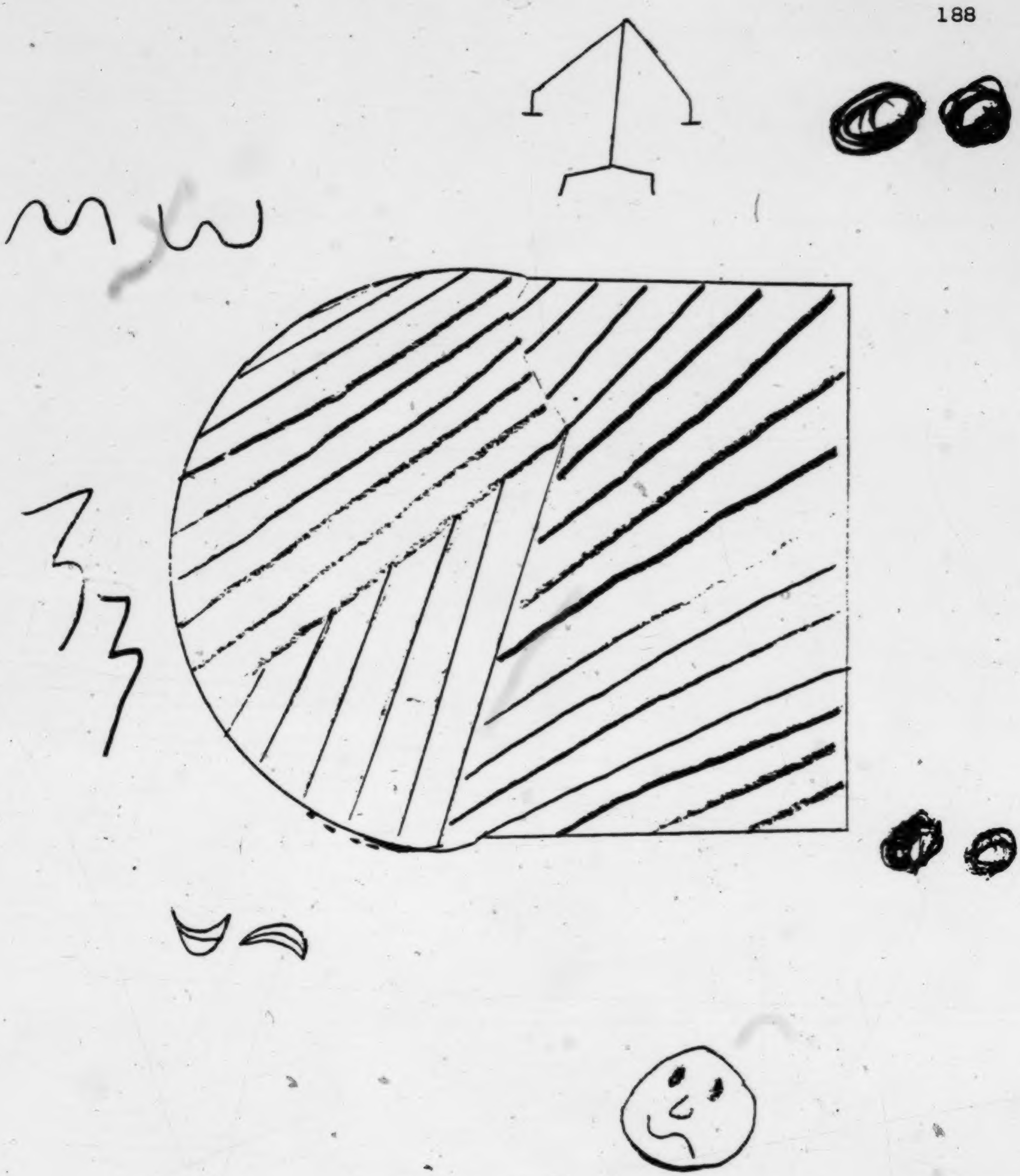
SCHOOL is a big lift.
If you have FRIENDS



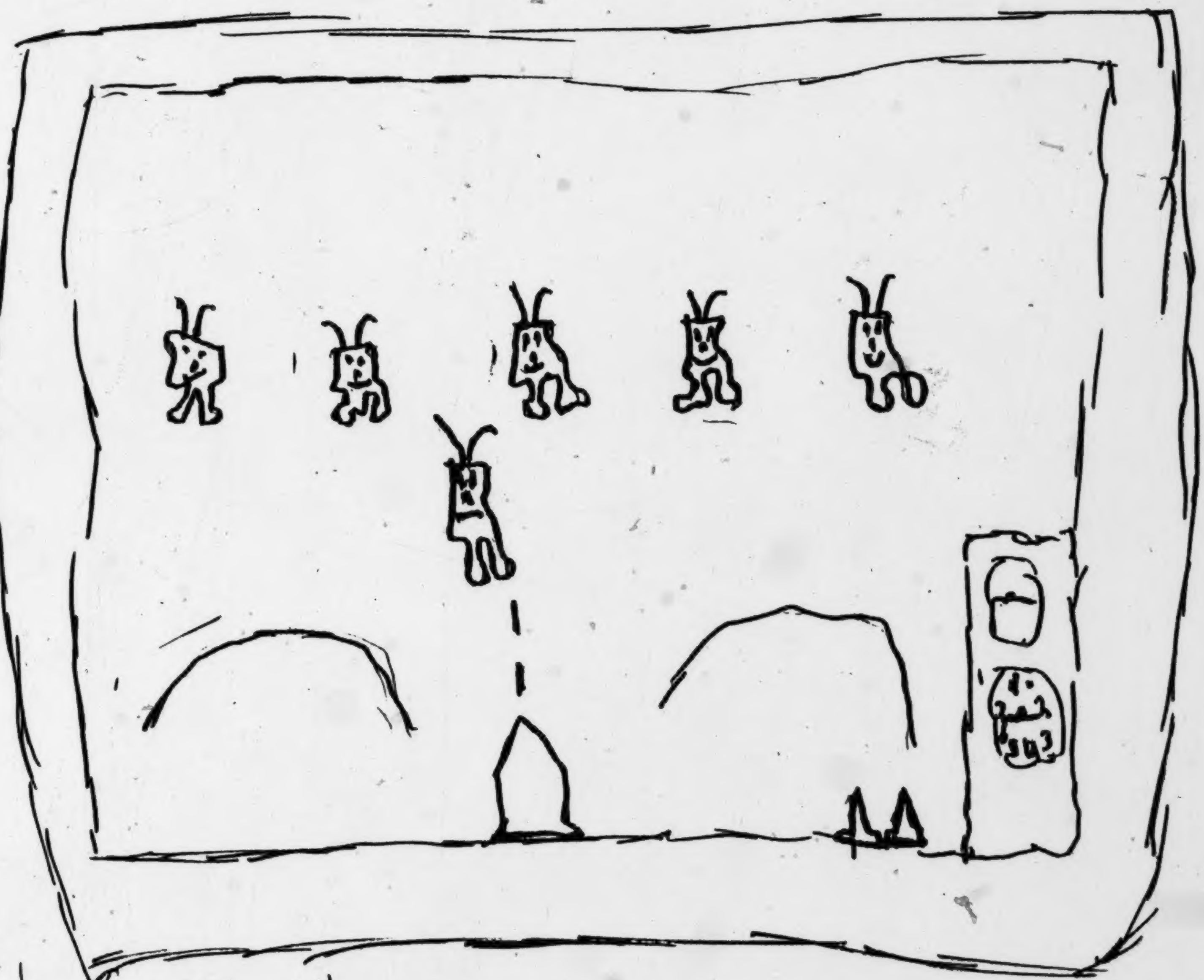
I feel that our class works as a team, and I appricate that they had the welcome mat out for me at the beginning of 1982. I was a loner before I met this class, and I now realize the value of friendship.


Before
MR Mugs
After
Sword of Shannala
Fridays
Party Time
Mondays
3941209
Bus ticket Good for 1 child's fare

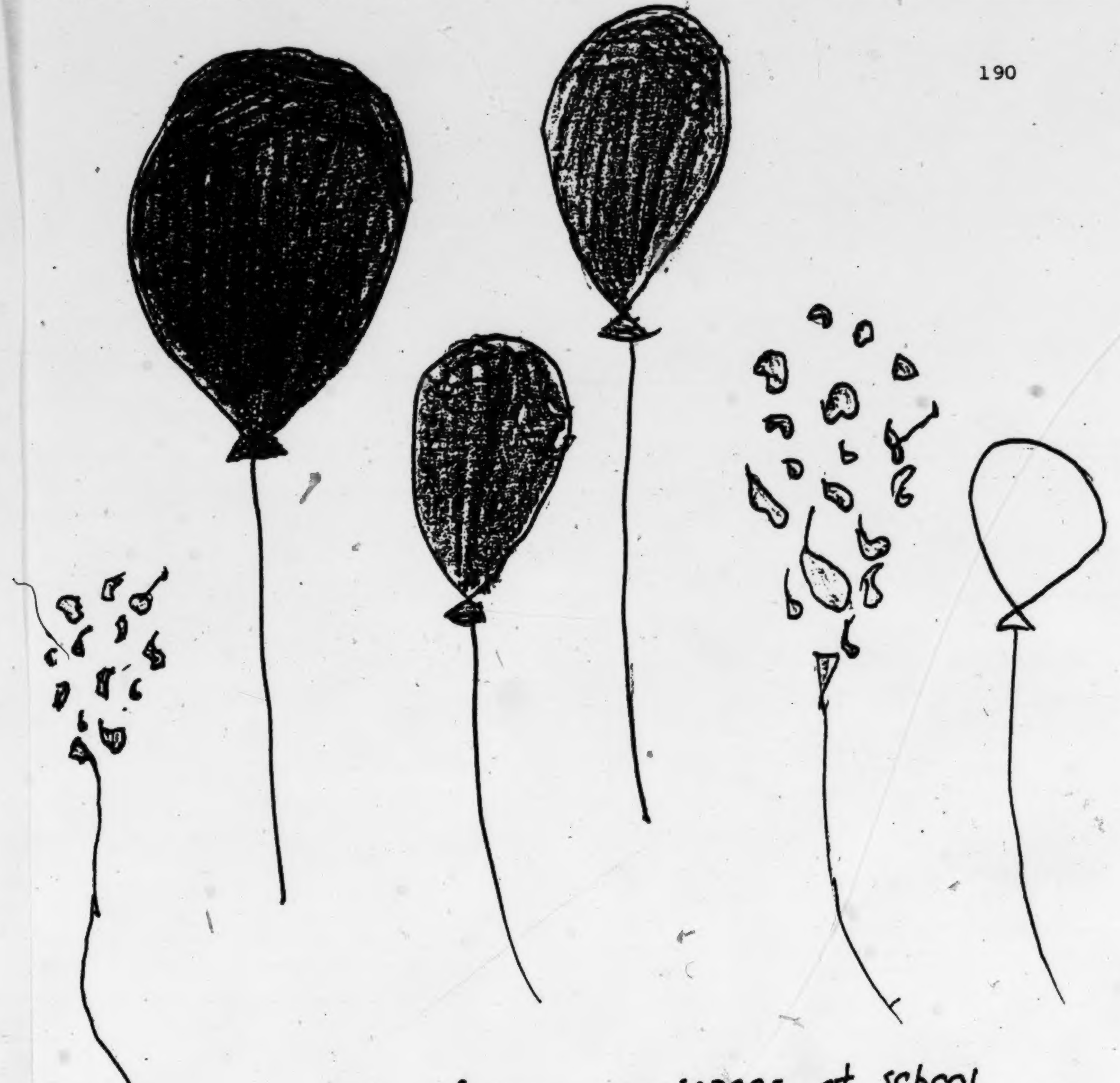
This program increased my vocabulary, and gave me a better liking of school, (except Mon.) I like taking the bus, but hate eating lunch at school.



School to me has it's ups and downs,as shown in the picture. It keeps me guessing from day to day. I would much rather know what's going to happen a little more.



The reason I drew (or tried to) a videogame is
because I feel school is something like it.
In School you are always trying your best but sometimes
it's like being blown up.



Lots of my experiences at school have been bright and cheerful, but some have shattered my life temporarily.

related to both the social and curricular themes and will be discussed in more depth.

Tensions and conflicts are produced when the actel children are not welcomed by the regular classroom students. One illustration refers to the exclusion as "always offensive." Having enemies makes the children feel a need to be on the defensive. Taking the bus from the old neighborhood in order to attend Greenfield school is experienced negatively by some of the children also.

The illustrations and the description of the classroom context for the first five weeks seem to support the four guiding themes that will be considered in this chapter.

In the chronological description of the children's experience presented in the last chapter and the thematic analysis to follow in this chapter, certain questions and issues are raised concerning the education of the gifted. Some of these questions and issues will be addressed in greater depth in the final chapter entitled "Reflections."

The social life of the children in the actel class is the first theme to be developed because it is the most significant and meaningful theme to them.

THE SOCIAL LIFE IN THE CLASSROOM

The importance of the social theme came through strongly in the first five weeks in the classroom and in the children's illustrations. Initially, the social interactions that I observed in the classroom revolved around helping one another with the subject matter or discussing assignments and when they were due. The social component of the academic work in the classroom was ever present and in this classroom, the social component provided a positive atmosphere that seemed to facilitate cooperation and on-task behavior. In a section from my journal notes of November 14, the social atmosphere during a math period is described:

> The children acknowledge one another often—it makes for a warm, friendly, and accepting atmosphere. Giselle passes Tanya and points at her with her pencil as though she's jabbing and they both laugh. Just a social interchange. There are many relaxed social interchanges during math. Jeremy is over talking quietly to Ed.
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 14)

In the first set of interviews, the students repeatedly talked about friends as being the most important advantage for them in the actel program. For some it was difficult to leave their good friends in their old schools, while for others it was a welcome escape from an unfriendly social situation. The program offered them the possibility of meeting new friends who could become kindred spirits. For some, however, it was not that easy to make the social adjustment. Dana's parents discuss their daughter's adjustment:

> **Mr. C:** After the initial happy euphoria of the first few months, Dana went through a few days of wondering if she had made the right choice. Also, there were times when she brought things like a robot she had made to school for show and tell and had been disappointed by friends or classmates who seemed more impressed by a store-bought Barbie doll.
>
> **Mrs. C:** There was a lot of jockeying for social position in grade five and really took priority in the first few months of school. This year there is a far more relaxed social atmosphere because everyone knows everyone else now.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

For others the adjustment was very smooth. Ed's parents describe his reaction to his actel classmates:

> **Mrs. E:** Ed has commented many times in the last year that he just didn't believe that there were other kids out there who thought like him and felt like him, and for the first time in his life he's found children he feels he can really relate to, and he's found a whole group of friends.
>
> **Mr. E:** It becomes interesting as Ed explains the feeling. The learning aspect sometimes almost becomes secondary to getting along with the friends because there's so much commonality.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

However, the social situation is complex and is described well by Jan's mother in the following section taken from our interview.

> **Mrs. P:** I know she's much happier this year. Last year she was in a group where they were really—I don't know the word—where they were more mature, more precocious and interested in boys and she really socialized mostly with those three girls. She said several times that she's happier this year because it's a wider group of friends and she still plays with the other children but you know she didn't get to know Shea last year but she says Shea is such a neat person and she really enjoys being with her—you

> know—not being silly around boys so much because Jan isn't into that. She seems so much more innocent and younger to me than a few in the class. She's only ten, you know. I know a lot of them have skipped but she isn't that advanced. She's much happier and feeling under much less pressure than she was last year.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

Mrs. P alluded to a social group last year in which Jan was feeling some pressure to socialize with boys in a way that made her uncomfortable. This year Jan has a wider group of friends and does not feel the same pressure to conform. This interview section highlights the importance of the social group, the existence of boy-girl relationships, the pressures to conform and the fact that friendships change and are flexible.

I was interested in knowing more about the social groups in the class. In my discussion with the students, they would often speak of the class as one big happy group but in the next breath, they would talk about smaller groups that were not part of the big group. Shea explains it this way in our interview:

> **Interviewer:** Is there a big group?
>
> **Shea:** Well, like some people have their own little groups like Cathy, Sherry, Lisa and I kind of hang around together for the past year but other than that we go with everybody else usually but we all eat together no matter what and stuff like that but basically everybody is just like a great big group, like just about the whole class.
>
> (Student Interview, January)

Ed tries to clarify my understanding of social groups in this way:

> **Ed:** Like some kids, like there's this group—Karen, Dawn and Donna, now they're sort of set apart from everybody and I don't think they even know what's going on really in the classroom because they're just never around anybody.
>
> **Interviewer:** How do they behave differently that would set them apart?
>
> **Ed:** I think they don't have as many friends. They're basically a threesome. Like everyone includes them but I don't think really deep down they're anybody's best friend deep down and so they don't really play with anyone else. Mostly, I'm not saying all of the time but mostly, like—okay, here's the boys, here's the girls, the girls are separated in groups and so are the boys. Now certain boys' groups mixed with the girls' groups okay? And certain boys' groups they're not included and they don't know what's happening.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

Ed identified the boys and girls that did not mix with the opposite sex and ones that were not included and so didn't know what was happening. The big group then must consist of boys and girls. This was confirmed when I interviewed Cathy, a member of a smaller group. I asked her how she would have to change in order to become part of the bigger group. She answered, "The big group includes boys and girls see, and that's different because we don't really include boys—not very much."

The degree to which students choose to be identified with the big social group may indicate the individual versus the group tension (i.e., the pressure to conform). Those that feel comfortable socializing with the opposite sex would find membership in the big group to be to their liking. Those that do not like to associate with the opposite sex would seek out others who felt the same way and they would form their own groups.

The boundaries of these groups were flexible because the students indicate that all of the people in the class are included in games if they want to join in, and during lunch, the class often sits in a big group to eat. In contrast to the one-sociable-class image, Dana discusses the closed nature of the small groups in this interview section:

> **Interviewer:** How many make up a group?
>
> **Dana:** Well, approximately three to five but they are very tight. It's very hard for new individuals to break in because I know Judy has just moved into our class and I know she's finding it very difficult to make friends because they've sort of got themselves into not cliques really, but in groups that are almost like families. It's socially hard to break into the group.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

It may be that it is not difficult to be accepted socially as part of the actel class but it is difficult to become part of a group within the class. The quality and intensity of the friendships are different for the class group in comparison with the smaller groups that constitute the class. During the weekends, the children seem to abandon groups and become one big class when it comes to calling classmates to play. Karen had mentioned in our first interview that she had a list of her classmates and would call them to play on the weekend. Mrs. E describes the situation this way:

> **Mrs. E:** With Ed what I perceive happening in his life is that even though there are all of these smaller groups, there's a much broader base. I mean if you wanted to play with someone on Saturday, you could go through a list of twenty kids if you really were desperate and wanted to play with somebody—if fifteen of them weren't home, you could still strike out and find somebody that you'd want to spend the afternoon with that it would be okay.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

The children found that the leaders of the school groups in the class were difficult to identify.

> **Interviewer:** Do you have a leader in the big group?
>
> **Giselle:** We don't have leaders but we have some people who stand out more—like Krista and I stand out more and Todd and Andrew do too.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Dawn agrees that the twins, Krista and Giselle, stand out but are not regarded as leaders.

> **Interviewer:** What position do the twins occupy in the class socially?
>
> **Dawn:** They're very popular, like, almost everybody flirts with them.
>
> **Interviewer:** Would you consider them to be leaders?
>
> **Dawn:** No. They're nice.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

I persist in my questioning regarding leaders in the class and Debbie says: "Probably Andrew is the leader, like, he's always doing things like trying to boss us. Like not really bossing us around but trying to run things" (Student Interview, Dec.). To these children, social groups are important but leaders are not easily identified or considered to play a prominent leadership role in the groups.

To belong socially is important to all of the children and, in addition to having friends and being part of at least one social group, they have added to a sense of belonging by calling one another nicknames. I became aware of this on November 9 when I was sitting by the computer with Krista, Ed and Sherry. Krista said to Ed, "Joko here's a whiz." When I asked them about their classmates' nicknames, they listed a number of them, including: Swiss for Clayton, Tard for Jason, Cupcake for Krista, Shortie for Shea, Scad for Jeremy, Honey for Sherry, and Tissy for Daryl. "What is Warren's nickname?" I asked. Krista replied, "He doesn't have one."

In a later interview, I asked Ed why Warren didn't have a nickname and he said:

> **Ed:** There are some kids, let's say Warren and Wesley. I know Wesley has a nickname. Everybody likes him, like I don't think he anybody's terrifically best friend. Let's take Warren for instance. He doesn't talk to people very much and I don't really know what goes on inside him but like, on the outside, he's quiet and maybe he's just like me inside. You never know. I don't mean the same person but on the outside he never shows it. Like he doesn't talk to

> anybody really so we just don't include him because when you do include him, you don't really know he's there.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

From Ed's explanation of why Warren doesn't have a nickname, it seems clear that Warren doesn't invest in the socializing and doesn't share who he is and so is considered to be a nonentity to a point. Nicknames are for those who are interested in being sociable.

Nicknames are again the topic of conversation at the computer and Cole discusses an undesirable nickname as follows:

> **Cole:** [to Wesley] If you had that name you'd probably be called Crapper.
>
> **Interviewer:** Who is called Crapper?
>
> **Cole:** Oh I was just thinking of what the consequences would be of having a name like Trapper—you could be nicknamed Crapper and that would be awful.
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 23)

I would have to agree with him!

As nicknames are an indication of belonging socially, so are invitations to parties. Krista describes the party scene with her grade six classmates:

> **Interviewer:** What kind of parties do you have?
>
> **Krista:** Sherry has two or three parties a year. Almost all of the girls in the classroom are invited and we just sit there and you're just around to have fun. A party isn't really a party. It's just a big get together and at our party, we were going to go sleigh riding but we rented a VCR because it was minus 38°C

> but it's really just a place where you get together and you listen to tapes. Not really a birthday party where, like you know, it's hard to explain. It's not just a stereotype party. It's just more of a get together.
>
> **Interviewer:** When you are at a sleep over, do you get much sleep?
>
> **Krista:** Well at Sherry's party not much because some people get slightly hyper and excited and I got to sleep at 4:30 a.m. one time and got up at six. But if you don't sleep it carries over on your school. Even if it's on Friday or Saturday, you're still tired on Monday, so we all try and get to sleep but Mrs. M doesn't mind really if we're up past 3:00 a.m. She just shuts the door.
>
> **Interviewer:** How many are invited to a sleeping party?
>
> **Krista:** Well when Giselle and I have a sleep over, we're allowed to ask one or two friends each but Sherry has had as many as thirteen for a sleep over and Mrs. M doesn't mind. It was really fun.
>
> **Interviewer:** How many parties in the year would you go to?
>
> **Krista:** Well, like everyone in the class or just me? Like about the average?
>
> **Interviewer:** Yes. Do you go to more parties than the average?
>
> **Krista:** Well, like, I've been to almost everybody's birthday party but there's usually about eight big parties from September to December and about five from January to June.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

If there are thirteen parties during the ten-month term, parties probably play an important role in the social life of the classroom. Not all of the children are invited to all of the parties and not all of the parties are large, but to be invited to parties is another way for the children to know that they are socially accepted.

So far the analysis of the social theme has included a discussion of social groups and their leaders, the significance of nicknames and the importance of parties in the social life of the classroom. Next, the social activities of the children during lunch and recess times and the games they play will be examined.

Lunch and Recess, Games and Play

In the first set of interviews, the children often mention the social importance of eating lunch at school and of having time to play with friends. They see lunch as a time to visit and to have a good laugh. If the lunch supervisor is nice, the children are allowed to sit in a big group and talk, but if the noise level becomes too high, they are split up into smaller groups. Although most children enjoy eating lunch at school, some disadvantages were mentioned, such as having the same thing in a bag lunch everyday. Also, children with braces on their teeth have to wait to be dismissed to brush their teeth, even though the orthodontist has instructed them to brush their teeth within five minutes of eating. The noon time television shows are missed by some children.

Topics discussed at lunch and recess are centered on what is happening in their world and so change daily. The games played in the lunch room are Truth Dare, Double Dare, or Triple Dare, or Quadruple Dare, and card games like Black Jack and Cheat. I am invited to play Cheat one noon hour:

Dawn: Do you know how to play Cheat? [holding a deck of cards.]

Interviewer: No, I don't know how to play Cheat.

Karen: We play it at noon.

Interviewer: I'd love to learn how to play it.

Karen: You'd be welcome to join us today.

Interviewer: Thanks but I can't today. Can I check with you about it some lunch time soon?

Dawn and Karen: Sure.

(Journal Notes, Nov. 10)

The children are quite well organized for the lunch time card games. As Dana explains:

Dana: Well we only play Black Jack, so if you don't have your cards, we have circuits—so if I bring my cards today, you bring yours tomorrow. If he brings his cards the next day then you just sort of follow this pattern. Sometimes kids forget it.

(Parent Interview, Nov.)

In the interview with Dana's parents at her house, Dana volunteered some information about lunch time and recess games:

Interviewer: When you play at recess and noon hours in your class, do you try to include everyone?

Dana: Normally. Some of the kids go off in little groups and play with each other, like Karen and Dawn. They just talk and make up poetry. Sometimes I play with them but we normally include each other. Some children eat lunch at home because they live in the Greenfield area so they arrive a little bit late but when they come and want to join in, we normally let them.

Interviewer: What kind of games do you play now that it is cold? You've played four-square and what other games do you play?

Dana: We used to play rebound and we still can until the snow gets really heavy. You use a racquetball or some kids can bring a little ball and you have to bounce the ball against the wall and the guy who catches it gets to go to the front and you have to do this fast so it becomes a game of skill and it's really quite fun but just sometimes you can't find a ball.

(Parent Interview, Nov.)

Finding a ball is very important because without the ball, the games cannot be played. Debbie explains it this way:

Interviewer: [recess] Debbie, is that blue ball a racquetball?

Debbie: Yeah, we play wall-ball or jump-the-ball.

Interviewer: I thought that you played four-square at recess.

Debbie: We do sometimes but the only kids who play four square are those that get the ball. There's only one ball.

(Journal Notes, Oct. 28)

To have the equipment to play the games is so important that it can lead to conflict. Dana describes the dynamics:

Dana: There's a bit of tension about, well Jason was sort of making trouble because he was sneaking out of the lunchroom to get balls when we were playing four-square and I think that a couple of the kids were getting there early so they took out the balls so that they could play two-man four-square which means only two people are allowed to play and we were only allowed three balls which meant at the most six kids could play so it hurt a lot of feelings and there was

> a game they were playing called war. You just pretended and you ran back and forth and shot at the enemy and it never was really serious. It's just some people were left out and that must have aroused some feelings.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

The importance of being included in games is felt by the students in this class not only because they have a strong need to be socially accepted but because the students from the regular classrooms exclude them from their games. This situation was mentioned often in the first set of interviews. The students depend on their classmates to include them in their games and to give them a sense of social belonging.

The excitement of recess play is obvious in this section from my journal notes of December 12:

> At recess, Karen was getting on her snowsuit and said, "If you want to see us buried alive in snow, just come outside at recess!"
>
> Jeremy: Yeah, but when they bury your face too, it gets pretty cold!
>
> Karen: They buried me with snow when I was on my knees! We buried Jeremy three times on Friday.
>
> (Journal Notes, Dec. 12)

Some of the students seek excitement by provoking the regular classroom children who exclude them from their games:

> **Interviewer:** What do you do at recess?

Warren: We usually just go to the hockey rink and try to interfere with the hockey games of the grade fives.

Interviewer: What do you do?

Warren: Those guys are hitting the puck around towards the goal and they accidentally hit it out to where me and him are and we kick it into the goal and the guy gets really mad at us.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

There are many lunch and recess activities but the most popular one is that of playing on the tire swings. The tire swings are the hot bed of the child culture and are the meeting place for some intense socializing.

Interviewer: What do you do at recess?

Shea: Like we sing songs. Like we usually get the tire swings. Our class usually gets all three tire swings and people try to pile on. Like there's this one tire swing, it's older than the other ones and not as sturdy and they just pile on. One time we got twelve people on there and they just try to get it to break, you know, and Sherry, Cathy, me and Debbie, like, we always play on this other tire swing and they try to swing on it.

Interviewer: Boys and girls?

Shea: Yeah!

(Student Interview, Jan.)

Boys and girls play on the tire swings but both ignore the fact that they are actually sitting on classmates of the opposite sex. Following is an example of this social phenomenon:

Interviewer: Do you like boys?

Sherry: No, not really.

Interviewer: Do you ever talk about them?

Sherry: No.

Interviewer: You just ignore them even if they're sitting on you at the tire swings! You just pretend you don't know who they are?

Sherry: We just scream because we're getting squished. I don't even notice who is there and who's not.

Interviewer: Really.

Sherry: Just try to stay on. It's really hard. We got fourteen people on.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

Cory discusses it from a male point of view.

Interviewer: Is it easy to be friends with the girls?

Cory: Sort of, yeah.

Interviewer: Can you talk about the same things?

Cory: Well, yeah, cause it doesn't really matter because on the swings, I find it easier to get on with the girls' swing because no one's pushing you off or anything.

Interviewer: But they are on the boys' swing?

Cory: Well, we're always mixed. I try to find any swing that I can.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

It's easier for Cory to socialize with classmates of both sexes at the tire swings because interesting conversation is not as important as trying to pile as many people on the swing without falling off. There is always the risk of breaking the swing support and getting hurt. Although socializing at the tire swings may make some friendships stronger, it is also a place where some conflicts and disagreements originate.

> **Interviewer:** What do you do at recess?
>
> **Jeremy:** Usually we just talk. Sometimes we go out to the tire swing but I always go out there and I always regret going there because like that's where Andrew and them go and some of my friends like to go there too. Actually, all of them do so I haven't really got much choice and so that's usually where we go.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Jeremy and Jan have a running battle and because Jan and Andrew and some others in that group are at the tire swings, Jeremy knows that the chances of getting into a fight with Jan are good. However, all of his friends go to the tire swings and so Jeremy feels that he doesn't have much choice if he is going to be included socially. The pressure to conform socially to be involved in group activities must be very strong in order to influence Jeremy to play at the tire swings even though he always regrets going there.

Fights and Conflicts

In the first five weeks that I was in the classroom, there was only one conflict that came to my attention and that was the one involving Jeremy's spreading of Jan's personal secret. However, at the Meet the Teacher Night, Shea's mother asked me if the boys were really that awful to the girls and I became aware of the possibility that there was dissension beneath the surface. In my first interview with Cole, he mentioned that some of his classmates beat him up.

Dana shed some light on the situation in the following interview:

> **Interviewer:** Do you find that there are disagreements among people, among groups?
>
> **Dana:** Oh some individuals are very conflictive and they make nuisances of themselves but we've sort of made an agreement that we don't listen to that person and that we shouldn't be mean because they'll just be mean back to us and like we don't really disagree over anything really major. Probably it would be because you thought someone was telling secrets about you and they weren't just little things that can be sorted out.
>
> **Interviewer:** Are there actual fights?
>
> **Dana:** No. Well, sometimes some of the boys get, you know, mad at each other and they go and talk it out and we've got a lot of peace-keepers in the class.
>
> **Interviewer:** Who are your peace-keepers?
>
> **Dana:** I know both the twins are peace-keepers. I'm only the interpreter so I've learned to keep the peace.
>
> **Interviewer:** Tell me about the job of interpreter.
>
> **Dana:** Well, you get caught in some pretty dangerous crossfire sometimes but it's not too bad. You don't really do much serious. You stand between two people and tell them what each other's opinions are and then you get the heck for it, but that doesn't really matter.
>
> **Interviewer:** What are the fights usually about?
>
> **Dana:** Oh, the girls don't really fight most of the time but see, some of the guys, like one time Cole thought he was taller than Andrew but there was probably a millimeter difference so they go into a fight about that. They didn't really get into a fight because Andrew isn't really a person who'll punch you out but they got in a slight disagreement and started a

couple of verbal abuses and then sort of led to little bit of chalk and chewing but it didn't evolve into anything.

Interviewer: If you looked at last year, is there one conflict in particular that was really serious?

Dana: Well, at the beginning Cole wasn't getting along in our class very well and now Andrew doesn't mind sitting beside him so he's not doing too badly this time but he really has a temper and when his temper gets out at you, you just stand back because he'll go into conniptions! So Cole just got on Jeremy's nerves a little too much and they started to fight and Jason sided with Jeremy which wasn't too good because then they both took the opinion that Cole was a wimp. It sort of evolved into after school brawls.

Interviewer: That was last year?

Dana: Yeah, but it sort of sorted out because Ms. W made it sort out. She talked several times.

Interviewer: What did she say to you actually when she talked to you about getting along?

Dana: Well we were divided into five groups and we each got bristol board and we put certain topics like "He's bugging me" and then we listed all of the ways that people bug one another.

Interviewer: Like brainstorming you mean?

Dana: Not really. She just gave us a lecture, not really a lecture, a talk about that some people's feelings were getting hurt. She didn't mention any names but she mentioned some names of people who would try to stop this and then she just told us that this was the assignment to be done before recess and you know, set about doing it.

Interviewer: Did that help you get along better?

Dana: Yes.

(Parent Interview, Nov.)

During a conflict or fight the children either ignore the troublemakers or they assume the roles of peacekeepers and interpreters in an effort to resolve the battle. The reasons given for the conflict seem so trivial to me and yet they spark the disagreement and initiate the acting out behavior. Obviously the reasons for the disagreements have a different meaning to the children than they do to me and these meanings are part of the child culture that is understood by the children. It was most interesting to note that the Ms. W, who was not part of the child culture, was able to bring about better harmony among the children. This also reflects the nature of the child culture in this room because it seems friendly to adults. The children cooperated with Ms. W to bring about a better understanding of social conflict possibly because they trusted that she would be fair and that the main problem of hurting peoples feelings transcended the boundaries of the child culture and of the adult culture. It was a problem that both understood in much the same way.

Anthony describes Jan and Jeremy's ongoing battle.

Interviewer: Are there many disagreements in class?

Anthony: Well between Jeremy, Jan and Jason, it's never-ending.

Interviewer: Why do they fight?

Anthony: Well Jeremy and Jason stick together against Jan because she'll do one thing and they'll start something like, whenever she gets hurt, everyone sucks up to her and that starts another fight.

Interviewer: What kinds of things do their fight about?

> **Anthony:** Well things like, she usually uses some people sometimes so that starts one. They'll fight about anything they can find. They'll argue about it.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Jeremy explains the conflict this way:

> **Jeremy:** Andrew and Todd hang around on the swings with people, especially Jan. Like I kind of like to stay away from her because we don't get along.
>
> **Interviewer:** How do you all sit on the swings?
>
> **Jeremy:** We try to see how many people we can get on at one time. Sometimes it's fun but like when people have big outbreaks, then it ruins everything. Like sometimes Jan will, like if there's too many people on and they get off balance and they fall on her and she falls off, like that happened today with me, and she got all mad and tried kicking me and everything you know. Then it's kind of aggravating cos like she always is coming up to you after and say "I'm sorry" and you have to say to her, "Don't say you're sorry. Just don't do it anymore." But like I've told her that and not much happens. Like I've tried to talk like Frank and Clayton and them to just, like, to get a different tire swing or go on the rink or something because it's not fun when she's around.

* * * * *

Jeremy describes another incident with Jan on the tire swings.

> **Jeremy:** So we were pushing with our feet and my foot got caught in the chain and I went with the tire and my foot hit Jan's foot and she fell off and she was swearing like usual and it's just really annoying because it doesn't sound good at all and it kind of gives a person a bad image and it doesn't look too good. It would be good if Jan's attitude could change.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

In the time between open conflict, Jeremy and Jan attempt to gather support from friends and this seems to ensure that the drama will be repeated with some variation the next day. This behavior is an effective way to get attention and to be in the limelight, but it also has the effect of compromising individual and class reputations. As Jeremy put it, "It kind of gives a person a bad image and it doesn't look too good." But the drama does continue and Ms. W keeps me well informed:

> **Ms. W:** Some interesting things have been happening. Jeremy and Jason were teasing Jan and it all blew up at noon yesterday. Jan had hurt her knee and Jeremy and Jason had sent her sympathy cards. She said that they were really bugging her. Apparently Jan swore at them and cried copiously! We talked about it in the hall after lunch yesterday and Jeremy and Jason said that they were doing it to everyone, not just to Jan.
>
> (Journal Notes, Dec. 2)

Conflicts do influence the classroom atmosphere in a negative way and can lead to more fights or disagreements between students. Following in an example:

> **Sherry:** Jan doesn't fight too much but once quite a few people were teasing her and I'm not sure why but they were teasing her a lot. She got pretty upset and somehow that led into a fight with Krista.
>
> **Interviewer:** With Krista? On what topic?
>
> **Sherry:** It did deal with Krista's parents I think. They were mad at Jan because she was crying all the time at recess. I don't see why they got into a fight. There's really no reason but Krista told her parents about it and her parents said they didn't want them to play together but they're friends again because

> someone said, "That was then and now is now," and so it's over. Krista hasn't gotten into fights lately, just little arguments.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Although conflict is part of the classroom experience most children are not involved in disagreements to the same extent as Jeremy and Jan. In the following interview, Dawn discusses fights that she has had with her classmates.

> **Interviewer:** Have you ever been in a fight or an argument with anyone?
>
> **Dawn:** Yes, many times.
>
> **Interviewer:** How does it usually start?
>
> **Dawn:** Well sometimes Karen says I'm always trying to outdo her and things like that.
>
> **Interviewer:** How long does a fight take from beginning to end usually?
>
> **Dawn:** Generally about five minutes.
>
> **Interviewer:** How is it usually solved?
>
> **Dawn:** Our fights usually begin at recess and then we come in and do a couple of assignments and then we're not having a fight anymore.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Dawn's disagreements are less intense and are short lived compared to Jan and Jeremy's conflicts. The cover term "fights" covers a wide range of conflicts that vary in quality. Following is an example of a full-fledged conflict in the classroom that occurred between Judy and Alison which required Ms. W's intervention:

> I arrived at school on November 18 and, when I entered the classroom, I found myself observing a crisis. Ms. W came into the classroom, Judy left the room and, a few minutes later, Alison came into the room weeping. The girls grouped around her and Debbie broke away from the group to say, "Oh sure, she cut her own pants" [disbelievingly]. I noticed that Judy and Alison's desks were apart and thought that there had been some problems. Alison then left and so neither Alison nor Judy were in the classroom.

Ms. W: [to class] Who saw what happened?

[Jan and Jeremy put up their hands.]

Ms. W: Tell me about it.

Jan: Well Judy was bugging Alison and poking her and talking to her. She took some scissors and was poking them at Alison and that's all I saw.

Jeremy: [who is seated at the back left hand corner while Alison and Judy are in the front right hand corner] That's all I noticed too.

Ms. W: Well, I think you should understand what happened. Judy was bugging Alison and poking at her with scissors which cannot be excused. However, Judy did not cut Alison's pants. Alison told me that Judy had cut her pants but she was not telling the truth. She wanted to get Judy into trouble and she has done Judy a wrong. All of you who stuck up for Alison really were not fair to Judy were you?

Jan: Are you sure Judy didn't do it?

Ms. W: Alison admitted that Judy had not cut her pants. We were discussing it with the Principal and there's no way that Judy could have cut Alison's pants. So that's the way that it is.

[Children return to work.]

Ms. W: [to me] Boy what a morning! It's taken the last sixty minutes to get to the bottom of this. Alison has been trying to get at Judy, but she really caught herself in a trap this time.

(Journal Notes, Nov. 18)

Gifted children have many talents but still must grow and mature socially like other children. They project such a positive image of their class not only as a way to manage the impressions of observers but because they seem to understand the importance of social harmony. They work toward being a tolerant and accepting group. However, in the process of maturing socially, conflict and conflict resolution play a significant role.

Taboo Subjects, Swearing, Secrets and Fantasy

An important part of the social life and child culture of the classroom revolves around the students' discussion of taboo subjects, the use of swearing, and the sharing of secrets and fantasies. The children are usually involved in these social activities when there are no adults listening.

In my interview with Kathy in October, she stated that the conversations at lunch time were often about pretty dirty stuff. This was the first clue that made me aware that taboo subjects were being discussed. I found out more about the students' behavior from Krista in our second interview:

> **Interviewer:** If there's one thing you could change at school, to make school even nicer for you, what would you change?
>
> **Krista:** Either, more art or not having the class be so dirty. The class is awfully dirty and I really don't like that.
>
> **Interviewer:** What do you mean by the term dirty? Is it vulgar and crude?

Krista: Well, yeah, like now, after Ms. W gave us a talk at camp about it, it's more just gross. Like, Why did the chicken cross the road? To get to the other side. Why did the frog cross the road? Because he was glued to the chicken, jokes like that. But last year it really got out of hand.

Interviewer: In what way?

Krista: Everybody that was in grade five thought grade five separated the big kids from the little kids so they started getting into sick stuff that we shouldn't be talking about. Like it's over our heads.

Interviewer: You find there's still some of that kind of thing.

Krista: Yeah, now it's not too bad. Like any class, like my old class, you always encounter that sometime whatever class you're in but now it's not a big thing. It's just gross jokes like that are really sick. Like not "dirty sick", just "gross sick".

Interviewer: When you say dirty do you mean things to do with sex?

Krista: Yeah. More boys are involved though. They started it because some were going out in grade four and nobody was going out because we thought it should be in grade seven or whatever and they kind of got caught up. Like they thought grade four was old enough to go out and they came into a class where only a grade seven was old enough to go out.

Interviewer: Is there much swearing now?

Krista: Not really. Last year there was, like it's not very much, like any class, it's hard to explain but every class would have some swearing. I started swearing at the end of last year but I only swore about three times and now I don't at all unless I'm telling a joke that includes swearing. Like in grade five, swearing used to be like if you were really 'cool' or 'macho', you did it and we thought of only adults doing it, but once you said a swear word if you really got mad at someone, the very worst you could do is swear but if you used it a lot, there was nothing bad left to do when you got mad! Now I don't

> swear. I never really did. You can't really call certain words swearing. There's not really a lot of swearing.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Krista says that taboo subjects include sick stuff that is over their heads and she distinguishes between "dirty sick" and "gross sick." The idea that things are over their heads suggests that they are too complex or too adult for them. When I asked about the meaning of dirty and its possible relationship to sex, Krista discussed the differing views of classmates concerning the proper age to start dating. Perhaps the idea of dating is closely associated with their concept of sex because it is the first formal acknowledgement of boy-girl relationships.

Swearing can be used to project a 'cool' or 'macho' image and to act like an adult. It can also be used in the telling of a joke or when a person is very angry. Krista concluded that swearing should not be used unless a person was angry and needed to swear to communicate that anger.

The battle between Jeremy and Jan includes swearing in anger:

> **Interviewer:** Is there a lot of swearing?
>
> **Jeremy:** Well mostly at recess and usually in anger. Jan does it all the time. She gets mad at someone. Like we were pushing her on the tire swing and they said not to push with our hands because then they can go into the post and they can get hurt.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

The children state that the boys are the main offenders and swear more than the girls and that swearing usually occurs among them when they are not around parents.

> **Interviewer:** Tell me about swearing.
>
> **Karen:** Well, okay, if you're around the kids on the playground, they just say whatever they want, but when they come over to my house or something, you don't hear a word.
>
> **Interviewer:** Why do you think that is?
>
> **Karen:** Because they think they'll get heck!
>
> (Student Interview, Dec.)

A good deal of ambivalence is expressed by the students concerning swearing. Lisa explains this in our interview:

> **Interviewer:** Why do you think they swear?
>
> **Lisa:** They think it's 'macho' or 'cool' or something.
>
> **Interviewer:** How does it affect you?
>
> **Lisa:** Well for one thing we set a bad example for other people and I don't know, they strike me as not being proper.
>
> **Interviewer:** Do you ever swear?
>
> **Lisa:** Well if I do, I usually say, "Excuse my language"!
>
> **Interviewer:** When would you swear?
>
> **Lisa:** Oh if I got mad or something.
>
> **Interviewer:** Do macho or cool people swear when they're angry or just as a way of talking?
>
> **Lisa:** Both.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Lisa feels a need to swear sometimes but thinks that it is improper and so usually says, "Excuse my language!" She also suggests that swearing sets a bad example and this reminds me of Jeremy's comment in an earlier interview about open conflict between classmates giving them a bad image. They seem to feel some responsibility to behave in an exemplary fashion socially and yet they are entering adolescence and are modeling some negative adult behaviors.

Physical maturation signals the exit of the children from childhood, and their growing into adulthood. The children react to these changes in different ways, as Krista explains:

> **Interviewer:** Do you find that people are excited about this whole idea of growing up physically or not?
>
> **Krista:** Well for some people, it's a big deal. Like I really don't care very much but some people, like a few people, have got their period already and a few people have got bras and so it's kind of, like, not a lot of people think a lot about it. Like most of our class don't think a lot about it unless you've gotten your period.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

If a person is forced by physical maturation to cope with changes, then it is a big deal. The whole class is aware of physical changes that are taking place but this awareness seems to translate into dirty talk generally rather than talk about specific personal physical changes.

Following are four extracts from my journal notes that focus on the children's reactions to growing up which reflect their feelings and behaviors.

> Ms. W is reading Dicey's Song and Dicey is dealing with growing up. Her Grandmother is buying her some clothes and noticing how much older she looks. Her Grandmother said that she had to talk to Dicey and Dicey said she knew all about sex. (The children in the class looked and smiled at one another nervously and knowingly.)
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 7)

> Ms. W told me last night that Alison had gone to the Principal to tell her that Jeremy was talking "dirty" to the girls. Ms. W phoned Jeremy's Mom and had a talk with Jeremy.
>
> (Journal Notes, Oct. 24)

> Sherry wears a terrible old sweater every day to hide the fact that she has developed faster than most of the other girls. She's tall and yet not out of place at all. She has probably finished her growing while so many of the girls haven't even started growing. The range in sizes and shapes strikes me again!
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 1)

> In the hall, Karen and Donna were in their coats and walked excitedly with me a few steps, looked around, and then Karen said to me: "Today in class, a note was being passed around that said that Jan was wearing a bra! It was true I know, but I was wondering who would pass around a note like that. Some people thought that I had made the note but it took some guessing for me to finally find out who it was. I won't mention any names, but it was a close friend of Jan who had a fight with her."
>
> [Very excited about this event. The feeling was one of excitement and "How could a person do this to her?" and "I'm glad it wasn't me who had the note written about me" or "Who wrote the note?" and "The friend of Jan's is not a friend". It was all so exciting and risky and unsettling!]
>
> (Journal Notes, Jan. 11)

The meaning that growing up has for the children is part of their child culture and can only be partially understood by someone who is not part of the culture. However, when Alison reported Jeremy's dirty talk, Ms. W was asked to deal with it. She is not part of the child culture but has the power of an adult to at least superficially change Jeremy's behavior around Alison. Ms. W would not have the power to influence the deeper meaning of the experience of growing up because that experience is part of the lived experience of these children and is out of her reach. Ms. W and other adults can only partially understand the experience and can identify with the children from the perspective of having experienced the same physical changes in their youth but in a different child culture at a different time.

Karen describes how the children play socially with the idea of growing up and she describes her feelings about the situation:

> **Karen:** It's kind of "disgusting" to me!
>
> **Interviewer:** [laughing] Tell me what is disgusting to you, Karen!
>
> **Karen:** Well I hate the way they take other words to mean certain other things. Like they go up to you and say, "Are you smart?" and you go, "Here's a change. Thanks for the compliment." "Smart" means you're pregnant!
>
> **Interviewer:** So it's just a game?
>
> **Karen:** Yeah and you're scared about what you're going to say next! You say a certain thing and, "Oh boy, she's said that word!"

would not approve of and that they themselves did not really approve of.

The taboo subjects include discussion about sex and growing up as well as swearing. Karen and Debbie both describe social situations where the children were playing games that were considered to be bad or stupid and revolved around taboo subjects. The pressure to participate in the games is great and the only students who might feel less pressure would be those in the smaller social groups that included only boys or girls.

Taboo subjects, swearing, secrets, and fantasies are part of the child culture and are not shared with adults. In fact, this part of the child culture is usually only revealed when a child tattles on a classmate and asks for adult intervention, as is the case of Jeremy talking dirty to Alison. As a participant observer for five months in this classroom, I observed very little in the classroom behavior that indicated the discussion of taboo subjects, swearing, secrets and fantasies. It was only in the interviews with the children that I became aware of their importance to the child culture. Following are some interview sections that focus on secrets and fantasies.

> **Interviewer:** Do you and your friends act differently around adults than when you're alone?
>
> **Krista:** At sleepovers, Sherry has lots of sleepovers, we tell secrets and stuff like that that we wouldn't do around adults.

> **Interviewer:** How does it make you feel?
>
> **Karen:** It's disgusting and I wish they wouldn't do that.
>
> (Student Interview, Dec.)

But the children feel the pressure to conform and to play the games. As Debbie explains:

> **Debbie:** People got frustrated because people were talking about things people really didn't want to talk about, or trying to make them do things they really didn't want to do, or trying to make somebody do something to you that you really didn't want them to do, or things like that, and people just got fed up with it and didn't play with those people that wanted to be like that.
>
> **Interviewer:** Were there girls and boys in the same numbers playing these games?
>
> **Debbie:** There were both but it seemed like there were more boys. There weren't that many girls. There were a few, like with the people that were playing that game, some people would just tag along after them 'cause they didn't want people to say, "Oh you're stupid," or "You're a little suck, you don't want to be bad," so they just told them and they followed them around and things like that.
>
> **Interviewer:** How does it make you feel when these little games are going on?
>
> **Debbie:** Well I think they're kind of stupid.
>
> (Student Interview, Dec.)

Debbie thinks that the games are stupid but people still tagged along so that their friends wouldn't ridicule them and call them "little sucks" because they didn't want to be bad. To want to be bad is an interesting part of any group that wants to define themselves as independent and in control. To be bad was to do something they knew adults

Interviewer: Generally what are the kinds of things that are told as secrets?

Krista: Oh secrets, like who you're mad at this week and why, or who the top boy is, you know, who you like. Like mainly it's just like a few secrets, say like who really is your top boy or your top five boys. Sometimes you just get really mad at somebody so you go and whisper to someone, "I'm so mad at so and so because they did whatever to me", and then like, some secrets you don't mind if they're spread but with some secrets you do mind and that's when you tell them in private.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

* * * * *

Interviewer: What makes Karen, Dawn and Donna group different?

Shea: Like they never sort of play, well, not play, well they never sort of hang around with the bigger group and they don't hang around or they don't talk the same as other people. We sort of develop like personalities, like I'm Norman or Norma and Sherry's, Motorcycle Jim, like, then Sherry became Norma—a version of Norman. Sherry says Andrew's lucky on Monday but we take after him outside at lunch and sometimes he makes fun of Lisa at lunch so we all grab spoons, knives, whatever we could and say, "Don't you do that."

Interviewer: And Norma is Sherry?

Shea: Yeah, Debbie is Norman and just sort of, like Debbie and Giselle are the Mom and Dad and me and Lisa are the daughters and Sherry and Cathy and Tanya are the sisters, so we have developed a family.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

* * * * *

Interviewer: Do you think it's important to have secrets with your group that adults are not welcome to know about?

Karen: Well I don't know. The kids enjoy it. I think they enjoy tricking people. I remember last year, you know everyone wants to feel important, and Dawn and I had a different way of doing that. Well, when we were really bored and, I hope that this tape doesn't get around.

Interviewer: This tape is absolutely confidential!

Karen: Well when we were really bored, one day I took to doing E.S.P. and our minds were subconsciously making up this whole thing and we were pretending that we could talk to the dead and stuff and it was exciting while we had it and no one thought it was stupid and Dawn was enjoying it and so was I and one day, she said, "Do you really believe this?" and I said, "Well, no, not anymore." I guess it had to come out because it couldn't go on forever. Like I somehow feel like I lost something that day.

Interviewer: But it was fun to be involved in it.

Karen: Yeah, to have a secret, to have something different.

Interviewer: Do you have secrets that you enjoy with people?

Karen: Not really right now.

Interviewer: Do you think you will have in the future?

Karen: Probably. We'll think of something when we get bored enough!

Interviewer: Do you think adults have secrets from children?

Karen: Oh, yeah, because adults never seem bored!

(Student Interview, Dec.)

Secrets is a cover term that can mean sharing personal information with a loyal friend, talking in a group about who is your top boy, telling who you're mad at, or playing a fantasy game secretly with a friend. Secrets and fantasy can add interest to life and are ways to combat boredom.

The Dance

The noon dance for the grades five and six students was certainly not a boring event but caused much excitement among the children! Those grade five and six students who planned to attend the dance were asked to bring a white gift for the Salvation Army Food Hampers as a ticket to enter the dance. The decision to go to the dance was a big one.

> **Andrew and Jan:** [to interviewer] Are you coming to the dance?
>
> **Interviewer:** Of course!
>
> **Andrew:** Good, I'll dance with you. [snapping his fingers]
>
> **Interviewer:** Alright!
>
> Children ask me if I'll really dance with Andrew tomorrow.
>
> **Interviewer:** Sure, you only live once!
>
> **Cole:** I wouldn't go to a dance if I was twenty years old! Fifty years old! One hundred years old! One billion years old!
>
> **Wesley:** Me neither.
>
> **Giselle and Dawn:** Most people aren't going to the dance. They would like it to be after school like the grade seven and eights. Besides you have to bring a white gift to get in. Usually grade seven and eights pay 50¢!
>
> **Dawn:** It's a dollar.
>
> **Debbie:** If I go to the dance, Mom will probably buy me a new outfit because she always does for my sister.
>
> (Journal Notes, Dec. 13)

> The day of the dance has finally arrived. Everyone was dancing in a fully-lit gym. The boys and girls were doing crazy, unsophisticated steps that were fun, and kept the dancing age-appropriate in my opinion. Surprise! Cole, who wouldn't go to a dance if he was one billion years old, was there and was dancing up a storm. His face was really red and flushed and his hair around his face was wet! His contortions approached some approximation to dance. Andrew, Krista and Giselle ran up to me when I entered. Andrew and I danced. The Principal was there as well as Ms. W, Mrs. M, and Mrs. S. All were dancing. Mr. J and the Student Representatives of Student Council were in charge of the tape and called the bingo dances and bunny hops. SRC (Student Reps) demonstrated the bunny hop and then all joined in. The children brought wrapped, white gifts that were put on a table at the door for donation to the Salvation Army for food hampers. The bell rang. Everyone was excited as they came into the classroom. For attendance, Dawn suggested that everyone say who they were dancing with last or what they were doing during the dance. How exciting to name the person you were actually dancing with! Some boys came into class saying, "That was fun, really fun!" as though they were surprised.
>
> (Journal Notes, Dec. 14)

I asked Cole about the dance in a later interview with him.

> **Interviewer:** Tell me about the dance.
>
> **Cole:** Well it was fun. At first people were shy. I think I was the only one dancing with one girl for about two minutes. It was quite fun. I wish that it wasn't at noon. That's one disadvantage. It's funner at night. We didn't have any pop or doughnuts or chips.
>
> **Interviewer:** Why did some people not go to the dance?
>
> **Cole:** Popularity I think. They're scared that no one will dance with them and they'll be ignored and I don't think that should be the case but it is.
>
> (Student Interview, Dec.)

Although many students rejected the idea of going to the dance at first, all but six were present. The main reasons given for not attending the dance included: (1) Parents did not give permission to participate; (2) The whole idea of actually dancing was embarrassing at this age; and (3) The children were afraid that no one would ask them to dance.

The afternoon following the noon dance was interrupted by a knock on the classroom door by the Principal. She entered the class and this is what happened:

> **Principal:** Someone in this class is very fickle. They said they'd dance with me and got so caught up with other women, that they didn't dance with me.
>
> **Todd:** I'll dance with you now.
>
> **Ms. W:** What will we sing?
>
> **Jason:** O Canada!
>
> **Cole:** We love you Jason.
>
> **Interviewer:** What about We Wish You a Merry Christmas?
>
> **Ms. W:** What about a Christmas carol that you've practised? Let's just clap.
>
> [Everyone clapped while the Principal and Todd danced. He escorted her to the door. Crazy but fun!]
>
> (Journal Notes, Dec. 14)

The dance provided the children with an opportunity to relax and to enjoy their classmates, but even in this social situation, some children chose not to be involved. This reinforces again the fact that the social life in the classroom is a complex one based on the children's different perspectives and values.

The Social Importance of Television, Movies and Computers

Experiences outside of the classroom context often have an influence on the child's social and academic life at school. Although the children have many different hobbies, watching television and movies is the pasttime that most of them have in common. Many of the children mentioned that they either had a computer at home or were going to buy one in the near future. Computer programming and playing videogames are considered to be exciting activities offered to those who have a computer.

How important are television shows and movies to the classroom social life of the children? Shea described the situation this way:

> **Interviewer:** How important is television to you when you come to school and you're with friends.
>
> **Shea:** Sometimes I really feel left out because everyone is saying, "Oh, did you see that on television last night?" and my Mom says, "Oh it's a week night and you can't stay up to watch it" or "I'm not letting you watch that kind of show", and everybody's talking about it. And Cathy and I, her parents are kind of, like she can't play on certain days and she doesn't get to go to as many movies as her friends, so we just feel left out and when everyone is asking "Did you see what was on television last night?" we just sit out and wonder what's happening. It's that way with movies too.
>
> **Interviewer:** Is it more like a social thing then?

Shea: Yeah, sort of. Like there's Flashdance and everybody saw it and they were talking about it and so I asked my Mom and she said "You can't see it", but then Krista phoned up and she said, "Giselle, Debbie and Cathy and me want you to come to Flashdance with us" and so I went, and as soon as I went, everyone stopped talking about it! That gets me mad. I can't stand that!

Interviewer: Is it really considered great if the movie is adult?

Shea: I guess so. Sometimes they think it's great. Like in Flashdance, there's a topless bar. There's different things on different movies. Like there's a movie survey in math, and when I came to Jason, he wrote Porno X rated movies and I didn't put that. I put 'other'. Like he and Jeremy kind of get like that.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

Shea's parents limit the amount of television and choose the programs that they allow her to watch. She feels left out and socially frustrated when she cannot participate in the discussions about a television show or movie.

To have cable television is considered to be a luxury by Karen.

Interviewer: How does television influence life in the classroom or with friends?

Karen: I get a lot of "Oh you don't have cable!" I get a lot of that.

Interviewer: Would you like to have cable?

Karen: Oh yeah, but I'd rather have a computer.

Interviewer: Why don't you have cable?

Karen: My parents think that television is one of the devil's playrooms. They think you shouldn't watch television and there are things you should be doing. They think I'm fat so they think I should be outside walking the dog or something.

Interviewer: When you say devil's playroom, do you think that there are some things on television that shouldn't be?

Karen: Oh yeah, like there are a couple of shows like Magnum P.I., bang! bang!

Interviewer: Violence.

Karen: Yep.

Interviewer: Do you think that influences people?

Karen: That depends on how unscrewed you are.

(Student Interview, Dec.)

Both Karen and Shea's parents are concerned about the negative influence that television viewing can have on their children. Parental values seem to determine the quantity and quality of television viewing.

Most of the children have a time limit on the amount of television that their parents allow them to watch. Following are some examples of this from my interviews:

Interviewer: How much television a day might you watch?

Lisa: Well I'm not really supposed to watch it on weekdays but sometimes I sneak in around half an hour sometimes.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

* * * * *

Interviewer: How much television do you watch?

Patrick: Not much but I watch more than I used to because I seem to have forgotten about my restrictions after the trip but still, I don't watch that much a day.

Interviewer: About how much?

Patrick: About two and a half hours.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

* * * * *

Interviewer: How much television a day do you watch?

Shea: My mom says if we watch after school then we can't watch after supper but if I watch after school, I usually watch Mork and Mindy and if supper's going to be late, we watch Three's Company.

Interviewer: How much television do you watch daily?

Shea: That's about one hour and a half.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

* * * * *

Dana's father explains the reason that they do not have a television.

Mr. C: We don't have a television because my wife and I were watching too much of it when the children were very young and so we gave it to the Salvation Army. We get a television set during Christmas holidays and the children get their fill of it. They seem to be quite bored with some of it but watch large amounts of it and become grumpy anyhow. There are even reruns during Christmas season so even if we get television only during Christmas, we see reruns!

(Parent Interview, Nov.)

Cory thinks that Dana is not missing out at all because she doesn't have a television. In his opinion, a computer is more important than a television.

> **Interviewer:** Do you talk about television shows with friends at school?
>
> **Cory:** Not really unless there's a really good show or new show out.
>
> **Interviewer:** If you didn't have a television, would you feel out of it with friends at school?
>
> **Cory:** No, Dana doesn't have one and I never even noticed it. I don't think television's that important. We have a computer at home and it's important. It's not a necessity but it sort of helps along the way.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Debbie feels that Dana is actually at an advantage because she doesn't have a television set.

> **Interviewer:** If someone didn't have a television, would they miss some of the things that are said in class?
>
> **Debbie:** Dana doesn't have a television and people are sitting here talking about their favorite television show and you say, "Oh did you see that last night?" and she goes, "No." But like I really think she's a lot smarter because she reads a lot of books because she doesn't have a television and I think that's really good. She's one of the smartest kids in our class and she knows a lot of facts. It's something to do but if you don't have it, it's good also because you have time to read books. You don't have anything else to do.
>
> (Student Interview, Dec.)

The children find that it is enjoyable to discuss television shows and movies with their classmates if the show or movie is new or especially good. While some of the class members feel that it is very important to be able to discuss television shows and movies in order to feel included socially, others state that it is not at all important to them.

Although they may not agree on the importance of television in their social lives, they all seem to agree on the desirability of owning a home computer. A computer is seen as an intelligent alternative to television.

Following are some interview extracts in which the children discuss the many ways that a home computer could be used:

> **Interviewer:** What's good about computers?
>
> **Cory:** They can expand a new idea and teach you. Like it's a whole new world. You can explore with it, there's games and you can figure out stuff and sort of program yourself.
>
> **Interviewer:** What kind of programming have you done?
>
> **Cory:** Well kind of simple like color programming along with sound. I've done like programs like doing questions and answers, sort of math programs and stuff like that.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

* * * * *

> **Interviewer:** How come they're [computers] educational?
>
> **Joey:** I don't know. You get to learn about like the lunar age and that, you know, and if you're around all these grownups, they've probably never been around computers so if you work with one, you feel a lot older.
>
> **Interviewer:** What about games? Are they educational?
>
> **Joey:** I don't know—maybe eye-hand coordination, and adults can use them for financial reasons.
>
> **Interviewer:** I hear you can learn how to type on it too.

Joey: And you can learn to play music on it too like you can get a keyboard for the Commodore I think it is and it can do tunes.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

* * * * *

Interviewer: Would it help you in school to have a computer at home?

Karen: Yeah, if you had a printer for reports for typing because we don't have a typewriter or anything. It would be a lot easier on the computer. You can rearrange a whole sentence just by pushing a button.

(Student Interview, Dec.)

* * * * *

Interviewer: How will computers be used in the future?

Wesley: Well in just homes, they'll be computerized in the year 2000 and past. They might even have robot servants. My mom is going to get a disc and she's going to keep all of her recipes on it so she just has to go down there and we might get a printer for it and then she'll just run the recipe she wants and it's printed out on the screen by just typing a few letters—but we don't have a printer and she doesn't know as much as we do.

Interviewer: I don't know much about it either.

Wesley: That's why my big brother and I will have to teach her about it.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

The children have an understanding of what computers can do for them but the most common use made of the computer at school and at home is to play videogames. Some of the computer games are more educational than others but they are all considered enjoyable to play. The children also use their school computer time as an opportunity to socialize. They really like the idea of teaching adults how to use the computer as both Joey and Wesley mentioned because it's a nice switch to know more than the adults know about computers. Joey said that it made him feel a lot older.

Discussion of the Social Theme

In the analysis of the social theme a number of topics were discussed, including the importance of friends, the makeup of the social groups, the meaning of leadership, and the party scene in this actel class. Games and social activities that the children were engaged in at lunch and recess times were many and varied, but the favorite social hangout was at the tire swings. Here the boys and girls met to risk life and limb by trying to pile as many people as possible on one swing. The fact that the support for the swing seemed to be weakening added that extra element of risk that was so exciting. Some of the fights and conflicts originated at or were enacted around the tire swing, while some disagreements took place in the classroom.

Taboo subjects, swearing, secrets, and fantasy were all part of the child culture and were discussed in detail. A description of the "big dance" that was held at noon hour gave a sense of the way that the children experienced the event even though six students did not attend.

Finally in this section on the social life of the children, their television and movie watching habits were discussed as well as their use of the computer. Although these activities did not take place in the classroom, they did influence its social life.

Having friends and being accepted socially is most important to the gifted children in Ms. W's class. Ed's father suggested that the curricular activities were of secondary importance to Ed because he was so happy to meet friends that were like him and that he enjoyed being with. For many of the children, the social acceptance that they experienced in the actel class was new to them because they were not accepted socially by classmates in their old schools. They expressed relief that they were socially acceptable to their gifted classmates and they appreciated the welcome that they received.

Even though the children found their peers to be tolerant and accepting as a group, their tolerance had limits! Certain students who were too different found themselves being ridiculed by their classmates. Cole, Warren, Judy, and Dana had difficulties socially because they were especially different in certain areas. Cole and Dana were called "square" while Warren and Judy were not included in social groups. Even though the children referred to their class as one big happy group where everyone was friends, this image did not reflect the social experience of all of the children.

The degree to which the children conformed to the group's way of behaving and contributed to the group socially determined their acceptance into certain groups. In the mixed groups, social interactions between boys and girls were influenced or regulated by parental values and by the children's judgement regarding what was appropriate behavior. Some children were uncomfortable with the opposite sex and so formed separate groups. The social groups within the class had different values and ways of viewing their social life.

As a participant observer in the classroom, the child culture was hidden from my view for the most part and was only made visible through the children's willingness to share it with me through the interviews. During the individual interviews, the pressure to protect the child culture was eased and some of the children actually enjoyed playing the role of informant. Karen continued to be an informant between interviews and other children added bits of information also. The kind of information that the boys and girls offered was different. Both discussed friends and social groups with the same kind of explicitness. However, the boys added more information about games, fights, and conflicts while the girls discussed taboo subjects, swearing, secrets, and fantasy more openly. It may be that the boys' interests are different than the girls' or it could be that the girls confided more personal information than the boys because they felt more comfortable with an interviewer of the same sex.

This age is difficult for the children developmentally because they are too young to behave like adults and yet they are too old to behave like children. It is an age of understanding much more about adulthood than they are emotionally or physically ready to act upon. The child culture provides a sense of belonging ~~for these~~ children who have one foot in the world of the child and one foot in the adult world. The social significance of the child culture is that it helps the children to negotiate a time of transition as a group with a common understanding of the meaning of the experience from their perspective.

PRESSURES AND EXPECTATIONS EXPERIENCED BY THE CHILDREN

An understanding of this theme is most important because it plays a significant role in, and is foundational to, the social and academic experiences of the children. Teachers, parents, and peers expect the gifted children to excel and the children feel the pressure to conform to these expectations.

In the first five weeks, the presentation of journal notes and interviews with students and parents reflected the teacher's expectations of the children in this highly structured classroom. Ms. W demands that work be done neatly, correctly and with thought. Students are expected to listen carefully to retain knowledge, and to use time productively.

To answer correctly is very important to the students and if they fail to give the right answer, they become quite frustrated and embarrassed. One student went so far as to equate knowing with a sense of worth when he suggested that because he didn't know the meaning of square root, that he was just a "useless person."

The children know what is expected of them when working on their math work schedules as can be seen in the following journal notes:

> **Ms. W:** [in Math] What did you learn about doing work schedules last year?
>
> **Different Students:** Work hard and fast. Efficient use of time. Even if a friend is two grades ahead, just work at your own rate. Put work schedule into your notebook. Do it well the first time.
>
> (Journal Notes, Oct. 19)

When I asked Mrs. P what her daughter Jan thought were Ms. W's expectations, she answered, "She knows Ms. W expects a lot and she really pushes herself to do better because she knows that's what Ms. W wants to see, and she's mentioned a couple of times now, again in this being fair and kind to people, they talk about it in class and it has a lot to do with their class discussions." Ms. W expects the students to push themselves to do their best work in class and to behave in a socially mature manner.

No time is wasted in class and students are expected to value their finished products.

> **Ms. W:** Who would you like to give the Christmas activity booklet to?
>
> **Tanya:** I'll give it to my next door neighbor.
>
> **Dawn:** Maybe I'll give it to someone in the class.
>
> [Work produced has some use. It is not done just for fun.]
>
> **Ms. W:** Is that the way you value your work by putting the candles you made into trade and swap? No candles in trade in swap!
>
> [Time is used minute by minute for productive activity.]
>
> (Journal Notes, Dec. 14)

One of the expectations of gifted children is that, with a good education, they can become successful in future careers. How do we educate students for future success? How do we know that what is offered to them in school has relevance to their success in the real world? In Ms. W's class, relevance can be seen as what is produced by the children in school. Finished products are to be valued and seem to represent something tangible that attests to the relevance of the activities. I think that parents regard the finished products that their children bring home from school as proof that progress is being made and that future success is assured if the children continue to be productive.

Cory's father and Ms. W reflect this view.

> **Ms. W:** Mr. L. came for the parent-teacher interview and felt that Cory did not push himself hard enough. I was wondering if it would be helpful to have a person in a respectable position come to talk to them about what they'll need to strive for in order to be successful.
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 23)

The children feel that it is important to do well in school because their marks will allow them to pursue training in their chosen careers. As Krista explains,

> **Interviewer:** Do you like getting your report card?
>
> **Krista:** Yeah, I guess so. Grades don't worry me as long as I do well except I know grades are important in grade 9 in high school because I want to be a vet and everybody says all they look at is your marks and I think that's true. I think coming into the actel program will help give me the nudge in the right direction.

But a well-rounded education is not considered to be particularly relevant to Cole's chosen career.

> **Cole:** I hate doing math. It's my worst subject.
>
> **Interviewer:** Why is it your worst subject?
>
> **Cole:** I don't like it. It's just, I don't know because my Dad likes it, but I think it's dull and trouble-making and I think I don't need it because I want to be either an actor or a writer, but friends say I should be an artist though.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

The expectations and pressures that the children feel seem to result in behavior that is task-oriented and productive. They are doing everything today that teachers and parents tell them will lead to success in the future.

In their effort to excel and meet the classroom expectations, the children also continue to prove themselves worthy of being part of a special class for the academically gifted.

In the discussion of the social life in the classroom, the social expectations that the children had of one another and of adults were presented. The expectations and pressure experienced by the children in the classroom context are closely identified with their need to excel in the academic subjects. The children's feeling about their curricular activities in the classroom context will be considered in the following section.

STUDENTS' FEELINGS ABOUT THEIR CURRICULAR EXPERIENCES

In the broader sense, the term curricular can include all of the planned and unplanned experiences that the students have in the school context. Curricular in the more narrow sense usually refers to the particular subject matter and the students' learning experiences that are planned by the teacher. It is in the more narrow sense that the curricular experiences of the gifted in this actel class will be discussed. Ms. W's educational program designed to meet the academic needs of the gifted included activities that had a greater scope and depth than those in the regular program and, furthermore, the pace in carrying out these activities was faster. The large number of field trips that the children enjoyed provided extended learning opportunities that increased the scope and depth of the learning experience. The expectations of the students were high and the sheer pace and number of challenging activities encouraged the children to be alert and productive. Some choice in the pace of work was offered to the children in the form of math work schedules and they liked the freedom from pressure that the math schedule offered.

The children navigate their curricular path by attending to the tasks assigned by the teacher while, at the same time, taking every available opportunity to socialize with their classmates. Many of the curricular activities have a heavy social component in which the children work in groups. In the first five weeks, events such as the treasure hunt and the camping experience focus on cooperation and social sensitivity. When the children were planning their treasure hunts, they had to decide what treasure would appeal to their classmates. That decision-making process required a sensitivity to their likes and dislikes. Camp was a highly social time where the children were expected to enjoy the company of their friends while being sensitive to the social needs of their non-graded buddies. The social learning experiences are often an integral part of the curricular activities planned by Ms. W.

I observed a number of special curricular events that provided enrichment for the school program. One of these events was the trip to the public library where the children were to work on a newspaper assignment. Following is an extract from my journal notes of October 17, 1982.

> It was October 17, a sunny crisp fall day and I arrived at Saskatoon Public Library at 1:00 p.m. to find the students involved in different tasks at the tables. The tables were organized in a huge area surrounded by shelves of books, and there was a desk where information could be found about the use of any materials in the library.

Todd: Hi, Mrs. V. H. Come and see what I'm doing.

Interviewer: What are you all doing here at the library? Did you have a tour?

Todd: Yes, but most of us have been here before but I learned to use the microfiche and can read the Star Phoenix back to at least 1940!

Interviewer: What is your assignment?

Todd: Mine is making up classified ads for a prehistoric newspaper. See, I included one for a pebble thrower and a weapon-maker.

Interviewer: Is everyone doing classified ads?

Giselle: We're doing a Middle Ages costume design for the newspaper. See, we have these pictures of how the people dressed and we got xeroxed copies of them to include in our newspaper article.

Interviewer: I'd better go and see what everyone else is doing.

> (I travelled from table to table and topics included: World War II (three stories); The Bubonic Plague; Prehistoric sports; Middle Aged Sports; Sports around World War II; weather during World War II. The children continue to work quietly but take time to visit with friends too. They are really ready to go but still have forty-five minutes to put in. Ms. W is correcting assignments in the midst of all. The newspapers from the 1940's are really interesting. The children were surprised by the price of clothing

> and food. A winter parka for an adult was $9.95; Dutch cleanser was 9¢; five bars of soap for 23¢. The children enjoyed being proficient at using the machine that displayed the newspaper on the screen. From the picture you could even make a reprint on a xerox machine that was connected to the machine. Dana wanted to show me the old books that had yellowed pages. She also said that she could find out what the weather was like during World War II by asking her friend who is a veteran.

The newspaper assignment was to result in each group's production of a newspaper based on an era in history. The information gathered at the public library was used by the children back in the classroom as they worked on their newspaper.

> After recess, Ms. W discusses the newspaper layout. Each group has to complete two sides of a big newspaper size piece of newsprint in rough. Ms. W: "Red pencil editing must be done before noon today. Why is editing so important?"
>
> **Student:** You can't have spelling mistakes in a newspaper.
>
> **Ms. W:** Right. So get into your groups and let's get to work.
>
> (Journal Notes, Oct. 19)

The children are enjoying working on their newspaper and Lisa asks me to read the rough draft of her report on the black plague. Dawn is excited about her writing too.

> **Dawn:** Read this for my newspaper and see what you think.
>
> **Interviewer:** Clothing for cavepeople includes fur and nothing?
>
> **Dawn:** Yeah, cavemen don't wear clothes all of the time.
>
> **Interviewer:** Oh, I guess not.

> Dana wanted me to read hers.
>
> **Ms.** W: Here are some examples of newspaper layouts. There are different layouts but they are equally pleasing.
>
> (Journal Notes, Oct. 31)

After all of the groups had handed in their finished newspapers, Ms. W sent them to a printer. The day that the printed newspapers returned from the printer was an exciting one.

> Ms. W: We have our newspapers back and the person who did it for us went to much trouble to reduce it and print it. She was so impressed with both the poetry booklet and the newspaper that she kept a copy of each. She said that if we ever did it again [the newspaper] that she would like a copy of it. Mr. E had the duplicating done and there is no charge. He did ask that it not be broadcast that there's no charge.
>
> The idea of being special and impressive is conveyed to the students. The expectation is that they will behave maturely when reaching for a poetry booklet.
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 10)

The newspapers were well done and the children smiled as they read the finished products.

The characteristics of the newspaper assignment as a curricular activity included a trip out of the school to the public library, working in groups, and producing a finished product that was good enough to impress the printer!

Another important curricular event that influences the school atmosphere but that is not planned by Ms. W is Hallowe'en. The children begin to plan for Hallowe'en early in October.

Interviewer: Are you going trick and treating?

Debbie: Oh yeah; my friends and I have our route all picked out. We'll start at 6:30 and go until 9:00 p.m.

Dawn: We have Guides that night and so we can only trick or treat on the way. I could make my witch mini-skirt as a sewing project for my Girl Guide Badge in sewing. I'm sure that I could do it and it wouldn't be hard.

Giselle: Are you coming to our Hallowe'en party, Mrs. V. H.?

Interviewer: Of course and I'll dress up too.

Giselle: What as?

Interviewer: Well, I have a choice. It could be as a fine lady or as Robin Hood.

Dawn: Dress up as a fine lady.

(Journal Notes, Oct. 18)

Student: What are you going to be for Hallowe'en? I'm still going to be garbage.

(Journal Notes, Oct. 24)

Giselle and Dawn show me the men's and women's costumes of the middle ages and we start to talk about Hallowe'en costumes.

Giselle: I could have been a flower or a bee but I decided to be a sock hopper from the Happy Days time. I'm going to put my hair in a ponytail and wear a scarf around my neck. It'll be neat.

Karen: I'm dressing up as a bowl full of lime jello.

Dawn: I could be a crazy witch or a princess. I think I'll be the witch.

(Journal Notes, Oct. 18)

Finally Hallowe'en Day arrives and the children come to school in the afternoon dressed in costumes. There is a costume parade in the halls and lines of children wind their way in and out of classrooms to show their costumes to those who did not dress up.

Only five of Ms. W's class are dressed up. Jan is dressed as a pantomimist with her face painted white and black. Her outfit is white and her toque is black. Giselle is a sock hopper with pigtails wearing a red full skirt, old-fashioned blouse, bobby socks and saddle shoes. Krista is dressed like a tramp and Karen is a headless horseman. The Hawaiian tourist is Dawn dressed in a Hawaiian shirt, sunglasses, camera, sunhat, thongs and carrying a real pineapple!

> Dawn: Some people don't believe that I have shorts under this Hawaiian shirt. Do you?
>
> Interviewer: Of course you have shorts on. You're a tourist.
>
> Ms. W: Karen, you'll have to take off your costume because we have work to do. Show us your costume quickly. Great! That's very creative.
>
> Karen takes off her outfit and looks at the health ditto sheet handed out.

All is quiet in Ms. W's room as the children work on the health sheet. The sounds of the children in the costume parade can be clearly heard in Ms. W's class but the door is closed and so the parade does not wind through her classroom. The five children who wore costumes are told that they may join the costume parade but must be responsible for work they missed. None of the five costumed students joined the parade.

After the dismissal bell rings, a number of the children are excitedly making arrangements to go Hallowe'ening together. One of the boys wants to go out with Cory but Cory already has made plans to go with someone else. They all have the same idea, that is to get the most candy by starting early and going late. Judy will start early and end early because she's afraid of the big kids. She will dress as the Statute of Liberty (Journal notes, Oct. 31).

It is the day after Hallowe'en and I'm anxious to find out how Karen enjoyed it.

> **Interviewer:** [whispering] Karen, how was Hallowe'en?
>
> **Karen:** Pretty good. I got in late, about 9:30 p.m.
>
> **Interviewer:** Did you get lots of candy?
>
> **Karen:** No, not that much. People are getting cheaper these days.
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 1)

The willingness of the children in Ms. W's class to sit quietly and do a health assignment while the rest of the school population was celebrating Hallowe'en intrigued me. No one asked if the costume parade would be coming into the room. The children took their cues from Ms. W and ignored the fact that a costume parade was even in progress.

Obviously Ms. W did not feel that the Hallowe'en celebration was a priority and this is not surprising in light of the fact that she places much importance on the efficient and productive use of time. The children may have enjoyed the celebrations if they had been encouraged to participate but what would they have to show for that time? Ms. W's class would have completed some work on a health assignment and that was important to Ms. W. I wondered how important the health assignment was to the children.

Although the children conformed to the behavior that Ms. W expected of them during school time on Hallowe'en day, they were excited about making plans to trick and treat with classmates that evening. They were still planning to enjoy Hallowe'en outside of the school context. However, within the classroom, Ms. W has the power to shape the experiences of the children in a way that best matches her educational priorities.

The next curricular event that will be presented is chocolate-making and could safely be said to be one of the most popular activities in which the children had been involved.

> Ms. W had Giselle and Krista help Ms. W to prepare for the chocolate-making this afternoon. They have made chocolates before. Chocolate wafers of white, pink, yellow and orange are put into individual jars. These jars of chocolate wafers are to be put into six electric frypans with water in them. The chocolate wafers are melting when the bell rings at 12:55 p.m. Directions are given and groups are formed. Almonds

are available for those who need them to make almond bark or chocolate almond. The groups are formed by the teacher and are all working well together.

Shea: I think that we should turn down the water because a drop of water has hit me two times on the arm and it kills. It really hurts.

Jeremy: No, we shouldn't turn it down. Just be careful not to drip.

Jan: I'll take the chocolates out. I haven't taken a turn yet.

Andrew: [comes running up] We did it. They're perfect! Come and see. [His yellow turtle chocolates looked really good.]

Jan: Ohh. . . .cold. (shiver shiver) [She just took the chocolates out into the winter cold.]

Debbie: I'm going to give mine to my grandparents.

Karen: I'm not going to eat mine. I'm just going to set them out and look at them until they turn moldy.

The emphasis is on working well in a group. The children are thrilled with letters of the alphabet and shapes such as turtles, peanuts, rabbits, deep swirls, roses, patties, wreaths, candy canes, bells, holly, Christmas ornament, happy faces, and peacocks.

Jeremy breaks up an almond to spread out in the mold. There is a concern about how many chocolates each person will have. Ms. W said two dozen each but it may not work out. Children walk around licking their fingers and smiling. After recess time, children put the chocolates into their containers for home. The chocolates are multicolored and in a good variety of shapes. Todd and Clayton give me a chocolate. Todd gives me a hug and says, "Merry Christmas!"

(Journal Notes, Dec. 13)

The children thoroughly enjoyed the chocolate making. They had to bring the electric frying pans and the jars from home but they know that it is their responsibility to make special events a success by bringing materials from home.

The group work encouraged the children to cooperate and to socialize. Following are Jan's comments concerning the value of the group work.

> **Interviewer:** How did the chocolate-making help you in school?
>
> **Jan:** I think we have to learn to be cooperative and learn that we can't always have what we want and that we have to get along with other people.
>
> **Interviewer:** Do you think it's good to choose your own groups or to have your groups chosen?
>
> **Jan:** I think it's good to have our groups chosen for us because you get a little bit more variety and you're not always with your best friends and some people could get left out.
>
> (Student Interview, Dec.)

Although there were many special events that could have been presented, one that I think is unique and very interesting is the modern dance workshop that two American dancers conducted for Ms. W's students. Following is the account of this workshop from my journal notes.

> It is the morning of October 25 and I have to leave to pick up Mardi and Tracy. They are the two dancers from Los Angeles who are doing this dance workshop. It should be interesting to see how the students interact with them.
>
> 11:00 a.m.—Some of the girls have come dressed in what they think a dancer wears, but they have chosen clothing from home that only approximates dancing garb. Giselle, who is very thin and perky looking, is wearing a blouse of rainbow colors with a big floppy collar, a pair of royal blue tights with royal blue track shorts with big open legs, a pair of leg warmers, in blue and white, and a pair of black soft ballet slippers. Shea is a real character. She is wearing shorts and a top in white terry towel but must have decided that pantyhose and loose, grungee-

looking, leg warmers would look dance-like! She's so petite that her garb looks like she is just playing house and has found her mother's pantyhose and leg warmers. Jan is dressed in her pink ballet outfit and is looking good. Sherry is a dancer and is dressed in shorts and a top and soft ballet slippers.

Mardi and Tracy do warm ups with the whole class and some of the boys are giggling. Dancers take unique and different poses that often shock children because they are different and because the use of body parts is dictated by the form. For example, to use the hips at the high point and to gyrate or twist with the hips back or accented, embarrasses the boys especially! They make fun and giggle. The one dancer, Tracy, has on a most skimpy dance leotard but it fit her well and is modest even though much skin is evident. After warm ups, the dancers show us their pre-Olympic dance that they will audition for in Los Angeles next week. They use music and a voice track first, and to this they do poses. The children have a chance to do poses then. The children who have had ballet do extended pretty poses while the boys use body parts more creatively and use different levels of space—high, medium and low.

In the dancing the boys are most interesting to watch because their movements are creative and unique. After Mardi and Tracy do the "pose" dance, they do a walking dance (forward, backward, sideways, different levels, and different speeds). The children are then asked to do a walking dance. The personalities of the children are personified, echoed, and exaggerated in creative movement.

Cole moves just like a turkey with no flow, just intense and jerky motions. Shea strikes out on her own in a very confident manner. Dana does her thing. She's dressed in jeans and a plaid shirt, certainly not a dancer's outfit, but she's an individual doing what she thinks is interesting. Judy doesn't move well. She's tense and stiff. Debbie keeps a big smile on her face and can see the humor in everything! Dawn and Karen are chubby and frumpy, but when doing the mirroring exercise, they do some crazy and unique moves that they enjoy. Jason, at first, had to be isolated because of poor behavior. Later he is integrated into the group.

(Journal Notes, Oct. 25)

As I observed the children in the dance session, I realized how unique each one was in his/her response to the situation. Some of the girls tried to dress like dancers and they were successful to varying degrees. Others did not think that it was important to dress differently at all. None of the boys had on the stereotypic clothes of male dancers but in our society, boys are not usually encouraged to take dancing lessons. The girls who had dance training would use their same movement patterns repeatedly while boys and girls without training showed more variation in their movement.

The point is that some of the students were anxious to conform to what they thought was the role and form of a dancer and this conformity restricted their movement and made it much less creative than the movement of their classmates. In the classroom, all of the students know what the role and expectations of gifted students are and a large majority of the students conform to these expectations. What would conformity look like if the children were expected to think critically and creatively and if curricular activities were process oriented? Would they continue to rely on the teacher's evaluation of their work as a measure of their success or would they be more self-evaluative as a result of taking on the responsibility for their own learning?

The last curricular event to be discussed is one that is not planned by Ms. W but is, rather, an important season of celebration in our society. The Christmas season is a very exciting time in the school.

> Todd comes down the hall and says to Jeremy and Frank: "Jeremy, you're Joseph, and Frank you're a shepherd!"
>
> **Jeremy:** You're kidding. I always wanted to be Joseph!
>
> **Todd:** Giselle is Mary and Tammy is Baby Jesus! Just kidding!
>
> **Jeremy:** Oh, I always wanted to be Joseph!
>
> **Todd:** Come to the library now.
>
> Todd, Jeremy and Frank are on their way to the library and meet Lisa who is half-running around the corner and Jeremy half hugs her and says, "I'm Joseph. I can't believe it!"
>
> The library is being used by the Christmas Program Committee to meet with groups of children who have signed up for different roles. Mrs. S and Mrs. Z are with grade five and six children, some from Ms. W's room. They are talking about a pioneer or Indian Christmas, and different people are being coached regarding the best costume for their role.
>
> Ms. W is talking to another group of grade five and six children about the traditional Christmas scene. Again costumes are discussed.
>
> **Ms. W:** The shepherds just need a sheet and a towel and a belt. It's the easiest costume. We perform on the evening of December 20th.
>
> [After some discussion about the scene, the children return to class and so do I.]
>
> The choir is in full voice and the sweet sound of harmonious Christmas music floats down the halls and drifts through the walls. It is beautiful and the children in the classroom are surrounded by beautiful song. The singing stops and the choir members file into class.
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 30)

Christmas plays and music are enjoyed by the students and parents but such activities do put a strain on everyone.

> **Interviewer:** Was there anything else in December to do with Christmas season that made school different?
>
> **Dana:** Well the Christmas Pageant—all the gym time is cut short because you can't use it because of the practising and there are a whole bunch of recitals and everything's crazy—but January they've always got stuff on and it's just as busy but December is bad because it's so busy because everyone's having Christmas parties and most birthdays are around December in our class.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Even having fun and celebrating can be hectic. The Christmas pageant was held on December 20 and the seasonally decorated gymnasium was filled to overflowing with parents and relatives. Although it was stifling hot, the children from Ms. W's room performed well. It had been exciting to prepare for the pageant but the children were very happy to have it finished.

There are special Christmas activities in the classroom, as Debbie explains.

> **Interviewer:** Do you like Christmas season at school?
>
> **Debbie:** Yeah, it's fun. Right now we're doing the Christmas unit and there are stockings and stars up on the bulletin board and you have to have thirty-five points in all. There's instructions. Like say you have to write a Christmas legend and then you have to do that and you hand it in to Ms. W and she marks it, and there's a book that tells you how many points you can get for each of them and there's this

> activity book that you can do and you can get ten points for it, but, like, Dawn and Clayton got fifteen points because it was so good.
>
> (Student Interview, Dec.)

For some, the challenge is to remain calm in spite of it all.

> **Interviewer:** How does Christmas and all the school things you do in December fit into your school experience?
>
> **Andrew:** Well it's basically the same with a little more adrenaline flowing so it's hard to calm down sometimes, but it's not very much different for me except we do more art activities or we do more activities too, like Christmas presents and fun stuff.
>
> (Student Interview, Dec.)

One of the important aspects of the Christmas pageant is that it brings all of the students in the school into the same production. Children from different rooms are chosen for the actual nativity scene and soloists audition to sing the hymns. Ms. W's students are integrated with the non-gifted students who often exclude them from games. They practise together for the concert and during Christmas season at least there is a sense of togetherness among the students.

The children are working hard on a Christmas unit and are striving to get the most points for their Christmas activities. Andrew is trying to remain calm and to behave. The students continue to attempt to meet the expectations that they will excel academically and behave in a mature manner.

There are many more special curricular events and field trips that the children experienced in addition to their regular academic subjects which will now be the focus for discussion. In the first five weeks in the classroom, the children described their regular school subjects as being challenging and not boring. They appeared to be highly motivated to do their best work and to be successful. I asked Dana to explain her views further.

> **Interviewer:** Are you successful in everything you do?
>
> **Dana:** I think with a little bit of guidance, I can be. It just depends on how you start off. If it's a real slow start, then you get too bored and decide not to work. Then if it's too hard, it might go over your head so it really depends how you start into it. But if you start in, at a level you can understand, I think you can be successful in every activity.
>
> **Interviewer:** What keeps you working and enjoying your work?
>
> **Dana:** I think it's mainly the teacher.
>
> **Interviewer:** Why?
>
> **Dana:** Well, the way she does in math is you can work at any pace you want. She just gives you a unit quiz and test, that is a pretest, and you just go at your own pace. She does set some guidelines, like you have to be finished Unit 5 by Christmas. That's not too hard to reach.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

Dana feels that she can be successful if the pace is right and if the work is understandable or at her level. She describes her math work as an example of the influence that Ms. W has in keeping her motivated to work well. The work schedule allows for choice in pace but gives much guidance in terms of structuring and sequencing of the activities.

Dana discusses other advantages to working alone in the following interview section.

> **Interviewer:** Do you like to work on your own or do you sometimes like working in groups or do you like competition?
>
> **Dana:** No! I really like working on my own. Like when you're working with one group, you often find that one subject is really super easy but it's boring and you have to copy out two questions for every one question. That's sixteen questions on a page done for the next morning and some kids are faster than you and you have to have it done by the next morning. But when you work at your own pace, it's easier. Like you can struggle on the parts you have a little bit of trouble on and grasp the subject rather than blindly making your way through the subject and doing things you don't need to do. Working on your own gives you some feeling of independence.
>
> **Interviewer:** Do you find it less boring to work on your own?
>
> **Dana:** Yeah and also if you're sick one day, you can catch up, but if you got three pages of homework and you don't know which three and you've got your math text and you haven't marked your sheets from last time and also there's a lot of competition that we've got in our class. We have some pretty good math whizes. Patrick and Cathy were in grade seven this year and Daryl got grade ten on his math quiz. So like, they find subjects easy where you might struggle.
>
> **Interviewer:** Does it take away the competition?
>
> **Dana:** Yep, when you work on your own, you don't really know what the other kids are doing.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

Working individually gives Dana a sense of independence and freedom from keeping pace with classmates who may be working faster or slower. She also appreciates the lack of competition that she feels when she can work on her own.

The students each have highs and lows, likes and dislikes in their curricular experiences as can be seen in the following interview extracts.

> **Interviewer:** Tell me about the silent reading time (USSR) that you have each day.
>
> **Dana:** Normally I find that that's not enough time because when I get absorbed in a book, you could shout at me and I won't hear it. Fifteen minutes goes very quickly if you're absorbed in a good book and as my parents both realize.
>
> **Interviewer:** Is USSR a time you look forward to?
>
> **Dana:** Yep, it's a time that's not really super important. Like if you came and it's raining and snowing and the bus is late, it's an advantage because there's nothing crucial in the first few minutes. It's just something you can come and pick up really fast.
>
> **Interviewer:** Would you recommend that way to begin a day?
>
> **Dana:** Half an hour's even better!
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

* * * * *

Cole's favorite subject is creative writing.

> **Cole:** I love writing 'cause I wrote, when I was sick one time, a two page story and two of my friends Clayton and Daryl were in it and they were the stars and they liked it so much that I wrote a sequel and I got a line of kids who want to be in my stories.

Interviewer: Do you make it a personalized story?

Cole: Yeah.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

Tanya and Dana are working on a landfill experiment for their science project and will observe it over the Christmas holidays.

Interviewer: Have you started your landfill experiment?

Tanya: Yeah, it's at Dana's house now but it will be at my house over the holidays because Dana will be away in Edmonton.

Interviewer: Do school things that have to be done at home impose on your time or do you enjoy it?

Tanya: I don't mind homework. It usually doesn't take too long and I don't have a lot of other things to do at home except piano, so I don't really mind it.

Interviewer: I notice that Ms. W at the end of the day has a number of things for you to take home and reminders to bring certain things. Have you found that you have had to become more organized since being in Ms. W's class?

Tanya: Yeah, I think because, like, we do a lot of things, a lot of field trips, go out for lunch a lot, do a lot of activities in school. Yeah, you have to become quite organized so you don't forget things.

Interviewer: How do you feel about all these activities?

Tanya: They're fun. They're different. Like—in my other schools, we didn't do near as much. We went on the odd field trip but they weren't as much fun.

(Student Interview, Dec.)

Debbie is feeling some pressure to complete a unit of math and I recorded this in my journal.

> Feelings about holidays are influenced by how much work must be completed before the holiday. On Monday when we were returning to class, I said to Debbie, "Well Debbie, Christmas holidays are coming. Are you excited about them?"
>
> **Debbie:** Not really. I have a unit in math to finish and I don't think I'll have the time.
>
> **Interviewer:** Could you finish it after Christmas?
>
> **Debbie:** No, it has to be done before Christmas.
>
> (Journal Notes, Dec. 13)

Dana is excited about her progress in the twelve minute run in physical education.

> **Interviewer:** Are you going for the twelve minute run at the Field House?
>
> **Dana:** Yes and we keep practising in school when we get physical education.
>
> **Interviewer:** Why couldn't you do a twelve minute run-walk at the school?
>
> **Dana:** We have to be timed during the run. I don't think most adults could run twelve minutes without stopping or with many of them having serious heart failure because you really have to work up to it. Like at the beginning we had to work up to it. Two minutes, I'll bet the four minutes was the hardest, two minutes was okay and easy to make but four minutes is tough. We did eleven minutes last time.
>
> **Interviewer:** Are you seeing some progress?
>
> **Dana:** Well, we've been working up slowly so that the muscles in our legs are getting stronger because at one time, the four minute run was sort of like signing your own death will, but now it gets really easy so you start to feel like you're flying around the gym.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

Evaluation

The children experience the special and regular curricular activities differently depending on the degree to which they are evaluated. Their performance in different subject areas is monitored carefully as can be seen in the following journal sections.

> Ms. W continually calls names out and asks students to come for corrections or to report a unit mark for her records. The children become efficient record keepers because they file all of their work that has been evaluated or tested in a class file box on the counter.
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 14)

> Ms. W has a file of folders set up so that the students can put tests and evaluation sheets in their own folders. I think that's a great idea! When accountability is so important to the teacher and to many parents, an organized folder system is an efficient way to keep track of what was done by whom and how well! Sherry just put her abacus test into the folder.
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 1)

> **Ms.** W: I have your webbing units marked and will be handing them out. [The whole atmosphere is one that encourages productivity. Cole is working at being unproductive.]
>
> (Journal Notes, Dec. 5)

> **Ms.** W: Here's your webbing. It was well done. The mark is based on what you could do, not on what others in the class did. [Krista wouldn't show Jan her mark. Karen to Dawn: "Guess what? I got 24 out of 25 on my webbing!"]
>
> (Journal Notes, Dec. 5)

> Ms. W is handing out math papers. Frank gets his paper and goes, "Darn, I got two wrong [he got 44/46]. I didn't finish one question and I wrote the other one down wrong." He smiles. He's not terribly upset. He's just surprised at his mistakes.
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 14)

> Ms. W: "Wesley, Fantastic work! Sherry" [Sherry grimaces at her paper]. Ms. W says, "It's not too bad."
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 14)

> Ms. W: I'll pass back your health tests and you don't have to talk about your marks to anyone. Some did quite well, while some did very poorly. An open-book exam doesn't mean that it's a snap. I think some of you didn't study at all. I didn't put in the correct answers because we are going over this test together.
>
> (Journal Notes, Jan. 4)

The children become very excited when it's time for the band teacher to evaluate their performance on their instruments.

> As soon as I come into the band room, some of Ms. W's students tell me excitedly, "We're having a test today."
>
> **Interviewer:** Good.
>
> **Children:** Good! [surprised]
>
> **Interviewer:** Yes, then I get to hear you play!
>
> The children are playing tunes and it sounds really good. Now flute players individually perform to be followed by the saxophones, trumpets, clarinets and drugs, trombone and French horns.
>
> (Journal Notes, Oct. 26)

* * * * *

> Children came in from band and stopped to talk. Andrew put his head on my shoulder and cried, "I failed my music test on the last two notes!" Dawn quietly mentioned that she had a 100% in her music test, and with that she walked on smiling!
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 30)

* * * * *

> Some individual tests on instruments were conducted. Andrew on trumpet didn't make it. It sounded good to me but I guess he missed one note. Dawn passed, Judy passed, but some children from the other rooms failed.
>
> (Journal Notes, Dec. 9)

I wondered how the children felt about getting their report cards because I thought that this would help me to understand how they felt about being evaluated in general. Following are some of the comments regarding report cards.

> Interviewer: How do you feel about report cards?
>
> Warren: Will I feel scared because I don't exactly know if I'm going to get like lots and lots of bad marks. Sometimes I get quite a few good marks, about half and half.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

> Interviewer: Do you get uptight about getting your report card?
>
> Shea: No, not really. Like I'm not bragging, but I do get pretty good marks, so like it's not a big deal.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

> Interviewer: Do you like getting your report card?
>
> Clayton: Usually.

Interviewer: Are some people in the class smarter than others?

Clayton: I'm not sure. I haven't looked at their report cards. I guess everyone's about the same.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

Interviewer: How do you feel about getting report cards?

Dana: I don't mind them. You don't get the report cards most kids do. Ms. W makes books for us so I don't mind them. You just have to read through them.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

The children take home a report card that is specially designed to inform the parents about the activities that are part of the actel program and to report on their child's progress both socially and academically. The report card that Ms. W sent home in November 1982 was a twelve page document. In the first eight pages, the parents were able to read about the particular activities included in each subject area, and in the last four pages the individual student achievement was recorded by using a checklist format. In math, spelling and reading, the student could have a checkmark under "consistently," "inconsistently" or "needs attention in this area." Subject areas other than math, spelling, and reading were not part of the report card checklist but reports and completed booklists that had been evaluated in social studies, science, and health were sent home. The remainder of the checklist report card included the following headings: (1) Organizational skills; (2)

creativity; (3) Work and study habits; (4) Group performance; and (5) Individual performance. The forty skills that were part of the checklist focused heavily on the students' ability to work neatly, efficiently, accurately, and in a cooperative and courteous manner.

Ed had some comments concerning how they liked this type of report card.

> **Interviewer:** How do you like your report cards?
>
> **Ed:** I like the report card because it sums up what we're doing and it gives us a check on it if we're doing good and I like that kind of thing, and also I'd like to see what I can do to improve mine because if you just have checks all the way down, like with a mark let's say you get a certain percentage on the test, you can try to get a better percentage on the next term, but this way, it may be excellent but it might not be perfect, and I don't know what I can improve on and I wish I did!
>
> **Interviewer:** So it's not very anxiety producing.
>
> **Ed:** It's good. It includes a lot of information of what we're doing.
>
> **Interviewer:** Do you like it better than say, the grade four report cards?
>
> **Ed:** Well I think there's a lot more comments which is good, and it really explains what we're doing, but the marks, like it's still, like I usually get full marks on it. Like it's not hard to do and so the problem is, I'd like to know more what I can improve on.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Ed would like to have more specific feedback like percentage marks because then he would know where he could improve. Ms. W's report card does not have marks or grades and is a very subjective reporting instrument. The children find it to be vague and not as informative as the report cards used in the regular program. This is surprising in light of the fact that evaluation plays an important role in the classroom and assignments and tests are marked with specific number grades. An advantage of Ms. W's report card is that the children do not compare grades and so there is no competition among them.

Evaluation is very important to the students because it gives them feedback regarding how well they are meeting expectations that they hold of themselves and that others hold of them. It is especially important to get good marks and good report cards because they prepare the students to take advantage of educational opportunities in the future that could lead to exciting and successful careers. Not only does the evaluation process render information that is helpful to teachers and students, but this information is communicated to parents who consider it to be an accurate reflection of the child's progress in all areas.

In the second set of interviews, I asked the children what they were looking forward to in grade seven and following are some of their responses.

> **Interviewer:** What do you think about when I say grade seven?
>
> **Debbie:** Well the thing I'm looking forward to most is that my sister won't be coming to this school any more and that's the thing I'm looking forward to because she'll be going to high school.

Interviewer: Well grade seven be a big change or will it be business as usual?

Debbie: Well I don't know. It sort of seems like when you're in grade six that you're not very old and you're young and there's two grades that can boss you around, but then you seem to be a younger grade but then grade seven seems to be one of the older grades, so only one grade can boss you around and when you're in grade eight you can boss everyone around!

Interviewer: Any other privileges in Division III?

Debbie: I know for one thing we won't be doing as many things because we won't have Ms. W and she does a lot of things. We'll have more dances, about five a year I think. We'll go to Victoria School for Home Economics.

(Student Interview, Dec.)

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Jan: I don't really think about it 'cause for some reason I don't think of school next year as being one year older or being into another year 'cause I'm with the same people all the time. So it's just like grade six again or grade five again and again and again, 'cause I've got the same people to work with.

(Student Interview, Dec.)

* * * * *

Interviewer: Are you looking forward to grade seven?

Karen: Not really. Grade seven and grade eight and then it's high school and I've heard what high school is like and besides that, our whole class is going to get split up and I don't like that. I'll be with Donna, Krista and Giselle at Evan Hardy, and a bunch of kids from our school really want to go there.

(Student Interview, Dec.)

* * * * *

> **Interviewer:** Do you look forward to grade seven?
>
> **Cole:** Sort of but I don't like growing up but in a way I do 'cause, I like growing up because then I won't have to go to school. I don't want to grow up because my Dad says it's not easy to be an adult and I think it's nice being a kid because once I've grown up, all my other friends might settle down somewhere. Andrew says he wants to be a major league ball player and Todd wants to be a vet and Patrick wants to be a biophysicist and they'd probably be scattered all over the globe with different jobs.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

The children look forward to grade seven, high school, and adulthood with a mixture of anticipation and apprehension. To enter high school means to leave the actel program and to lose many friends who will go to different high schools. It also means leaving a classroom setting that has provided a secure and nurturing atmosphere. There are advantages to growing older, such as being able to "boss" younger children around!

The fourth theme that will be analyzed is labelled "tensions and conflicts" because the children experience a number of decision-making situations every day and must choose from alternatives that often represent extremes. An example of this is the choice between having like an individual or conforming to group pressure. This and other tension pairs will now be discussed.

TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS EXPERIENCED BY THE ACTEL STUDENTS

The tension theme is so closely linked with the social, curricular and expectations themes because many of the tensions can be seen to exist in the context of themes already discussed. Some of the tensions that the children in the actel program experienced were ones common to all children while others were unique to most of the children in the grade six actel class. During the first five weeks in the classroom a number of tension pairs became evident. For instance, in the social area, all children, including the gifted, have to decide upon the degree to which they will conform in order to be accepted by their peer group and this represents an individual versus the group tension. A second source of tension that is unique to the actel children is one they experienced when they are confronted with a choice between keeping old friends at their previous schools and making new friends at their new school. It is an old friends versus new friends tension or conflict. A third social tension for the actel students is due to the behavior of students in the regular classes who often teased them and excluded them from games. This tension can be seen as a result of a class of special students coexisting with classes of regular students. Because the actel children are considered to have special needs and to be different, they become vulnerable to attack by those who are threatened by the difference.

The fourth tension experienced by the actel children is the choice versus structure tension. In the classroom the children are expected to cooperate with their teachers who offer varying degrees of both control and freedom of choice. They are expected to excel and to be independent workers in a classroom where the structure and the control imposed by the teacher leaves them with little freedom of choice.

The fifth tension is between behaving like a child or behaving like an adult. The gifted children in Ms. W's class saw themselves as mature individuals who were expected to behave in a mature manner. However, they were still children and, therefore, the choice between acting like an adult or like a child presented itself many times daily.

The children often experienced tensions and conflicts when they made decisions that may or may not have turned out to be the right ones. Their decisions were usually influenced by the expectations that they have of themselves and that others have of them. They want to excel academically and to behave in socially mature ways. Decision-making is a risky business and the children learn from the consequences of their decisions.

The Individual Versus the Group

The first tension pair to be discussed is that of the individual versus the group. In the first set of interviews, Dana described her struggle this way, "If you don't fit in, they think you're weird. If you do fit in, you lose yourself." I asked her classmates how much they felt that they had to conform to be liked by their classmates and they answered in this way:

> **Krista:** There's nothing you really have to do to be friends with somebody. Like, if somebody's got a good idea or way to dress we all dress that way but if somebody thinks that the way they dress is "in" and that everybody has to do it, there's no point in being friends with them because they're just snobs.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

* * * * *

> **Interviewer:** Do you have to conform to be liked?
>
> **Giselle:** No because people here just take you as you are but at our other school they called us "hot shots" and they didn't know us but it's just because we were going to actel. But here everyone is equal.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

* * * * *

> **Interviewer:** How much do you have to be like others to be their friends?
>
> **Sherry:** Well you don't have to be too much like other people. Shea and I are totally different.
>
> **Interviewer:** What makes you friends then?
>
> **Sherry:** Probably being different because then you learn about other people and if everyone's the same, they can't have much fun.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

* * * * *

> **Interviewer:** How much do you have to conform and be like others to be acceptable?
>
> **Cory:** Well it's not really being like others. It's like if someone's doing something there's no reason to do something else. You may as well join them cause like if you don't like what they're doing, there's no reason you should join them.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

> **Interviewer:** Do you think you have to conform and be like others to be liked?
>
> **Cathy:** Yeah.
>
> **Interviewer:** How much room is there for being an individual.
>
> **Cathy:** Not very much.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Some of the students felt that it was socially acceptable to behave like individuals in the class group while others felt that it was important to conform to be liked by others. Although everyone was seen to be equal intellectually in the class by Giselle, Sherry stated that she liked to have friends that were different from herself socially because that made life more interesting. Cory suggested that it wasn't a choice between being an individual or conforming to the group's behavior, but that his decisions hinged on whether or not he was interested in what the group was doing at the time. It is obvious that the children were quite individualistic in their answers and did not conform to any degree in their responses. However, they are concerned about being accepted socially as can be seen in this discussion with Karen.

> **Karen:** [very nervously—as we are leaving the room] How do the other kids talk about me? What do they think of me?
>
> **Interviewer:** They say that you are friends with—.
>
> **Karen:** [interrupts] Dawn and Donna.
>
> **Interviewer:** Yes and that although you are a definite group, that you are welcome in the big group too. You are well liked, Karen.
>
> **Karen:** [nervously] Really? Oh good! Gee thanks!
>
> (Journal Notes, Jan. 16)

Karen was genuinely relieved when I told her that she was well regarded by her classmates! In my interview with Dawn, she talked about the desirability of being popular.

> **Dawn:** I'd just like to have friends and not to be popular. I'd rather not.
>
> **Interviewer:** What's bad about being popular?
>
> **Dawn:** Well you always hang around with the same group. There's always the group that hangs around. There's "popular" and there's "not as popular" but there's not "unpopular" in this class.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

There may not be children who are unpopular in the class, but those who are too different are not as likely to be socially acceptable. In the cases of Cole and Dana, the class's tolerance for nonconformity reached its limits. Both Cole and Dana were considered to be "square" and had been teased by their classmates. Although the children valued uniqueness, they also valued a certain degree of conformity that added to a feeling of being one big happy class. They mentioned in the first set of interviews that they got along well with one another and that everyone was friendly and accepting.

The decision to behave like an individual or to conform to the group's behavior is a complex one that varies depending on the child and the situation. Although the children have learned certain guidelines regarding appropriate behavior in specific situations, their lived experience in real life contexts challenges them to use their best judgement in arriving at decisions that will have the desired consequences.

Old Friends Versus New Friends

The second tension set involves the children's concerns about keeping old friends in their home neighborhoods while cultivating new friends in the actel program. With the exception of four students, the children in the actel classroom are from outside the neighborhood.

In the September interviews, in which the children discussed their decision to join the actel program, the topic of friends emerged as a central focus. If they had many friends, they had to decide whether or not to leave them in order to join the actel program where new friends were not guaranteed to be as good. If they had no friends, or were having difficulty socially, it was not as difficult a decision to leave the old neighborhood. Some of the children's friendships with old friends continued to flourish once they had entered the actel program while others felt that they had been dumped by old friends. Wesley actually felt embarrassed to say "hi" to the people from his old school and complained that his new friends in the actel program lived too far away to make socializing after school and on weekends convenient. This situation does seem to create a certain degree of tension in the children.

Special Class in a Regular School

The third tension is that of being a special class in a regular school. This tension has been discussed in the analysis of the social theme as well as in the context and interviews presented in the last chapter. Some of the children in the regular classes tease the actel children and call them names. They are also excluded from games, as Todd explains.

> **Todd:** But people that are ignorant like some of the kids in the grade 6 and 7 classes—like they won't let—if you're in actel, they won't let you play football with them unless you're really, really good at it and you can make a touchdown for sure every game.
>
> **Warren:** Yeah, they're a lot more critical.
>
> **Todd:** Like Andrew makes a touchdown easy every game so he gets to play with them but whereas me, I make a touchdown every year so they don't let me play.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

Because of being excluded from some games and activities, the actel children stick together in social groups that are their defense against feeling rejected. They also stand together as a class and consider an attack by someone in the regular class as an attack against their whole class.

> **Todd:** Well I think most of the fights have not been between actually our classroom but rather between our classroom and other classrooms.
>
> **Interviewer:** What form does that take?
>
> **Todd:** Well like a while ago, a guy in grade 8, he's pretty big, his name is Chet, he came up to Ed and Ed said "Hi" to him and he hit him on the head and then another guy came up and just started pushing Ed on the ground and started strangling him.
>
> **Interviewer:** What happened then?
>
> **Todd:** Well it wasn't just Ed and nothing is really happening now. They just kind of figure to heck with us.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

To be considered different and to be singled out for name calling, teasing, or physical attack does create tension and heightens the children's need for social acceptance among their actel peers.

Choice Versus Structure

The fourth tension set can be seen as a choice versus structure tension or conflict. The reality of life in classrooms includes the space, time and control dimensions discussed by Jackson (1968) in his book Life in Classrooms.

Tension is created by the students' captive status in the classroom because of their need for opportunities to have freedom of choice. The space dimension in the classroom crowds the children into one room and allows little privacy or personal space. The teacher is like a gatekeeper in her role of giving permission to students to leave the classroom space for some good reason. The time dimension is structured by timetables and school bells and the control dimension is imposed on the children by the teachers and administrators in the school. It is important for the children to know the rules of the school and to follow them. If they do not follow the rules, then they answer to the teachers and administrators who are the controlling figures in the school.

Patrick has been out of school for three months visiting relatives in Guatemala and had just returned to Ms. W's classroom when I had a chance to visit with him.

> **Interviewer:** You've been away since September 26 and have been visiting relatives in Guatemala. How does it feel to be back at school?
>
> **Patrick:** You feel quite burdened because in Guatemala I did take some homework but I didn't feel burdened because I felt so free and I only worked three hours a day.
>
> **Interviewer:** What do you feel burdened with?
>
> **Patrick:** Well just having to be in the one place for most of the day and also all the homework you get. Well, not all the homework because you don't get very much but just homework because I never used to have it.

> **Interviewer:** What were some of the things that struck you about being back in the classroom?
>
> **Patrick:** It was very comforting just to be back in what you usually do. It was burdening but sort of comforting.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

Patrick mentioned the time and space demands of the classroom as well as homework which can be seen as being imposed by the teacher who controls the classroom curricular activities and sets the time deadlines for assignments. The structure of the classroom life was familiar to Patrick and therefore comforting while, at the same time, he found it to be a burden.

I asked Clayton how he felt about school after having the Christmas holiday and this was his reply.

> **Clayton:** I don't know. You've got more energy and you're used to being able to do what you want and then you're "cooped up".
>
> **Interviewer:** How would you define "cooped up" in terms of school?
>
> **Clayton:** I don't know. Like you can't talk except at recess and it's a bit stricter.
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

The children did have some freedom to move in the classroom, as is described in my journal notes of November 14.

> Because the children are on individual work schedules, they can sometimes take a stroll and do a survey which is part of the schedule and Ms. W trusts that they are on task. It's a great way to socialize

> even if just to smile and say "Hello" to a friend. The children don't take advantage usually but if they seem to be just visiting, Ms. W will say as she just did to Sherry, "Nothing to do Sherry? I have more work schedules here."
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 14)

If moving around in the class space and talking are necessary to complete an assignment, such as a class survey, then Ms. W allows it. As was evident in the description of the classroom context in Chapter Five, Ms. W closely controls the way in which the children use their time and she encourages them to be as efficient and as productive as possible. The children conform to her expectations and work diligently to please her.

I was interested in the children's feelings about choice in their classroom experience and found the following discussion with some students to be informative.

> Interviewer: Did you like poetry as much as novel reading?
>
> Wesley, Cole, and Alison: Yeah, poetry is fun.
>
> Wesley: I like the personal poetry best because you don't have to follow rules. You can do it the way you want to.
>
> (Journal Notes, Oct. 28)

Wesley expressed the feeling that personal poetry allowed him the freedom to write without following rules. How much choice do the children in Ms. W's class have in terms of their assignments and tasks? I asked about their social studies assignment in this discussion.

Interviewer: Did you have free choice as to topic?

Karen and Donna: No you had to pick from Ms. W's topics.

Interviewer: Would you have preferred to pick your own topic?

Karen: Yes, because when you pick your own topic then your heart is really in it and you do a better job.

(Journal Notes, Oct. 26)

The children are expected to strive for excellence within the structure imposed by Ms. W in the classroom. Are excellence and imposed structure mutually exclusive or does structure encourage excellence? The children conform to Ms. W's concept of excellence and complete tasks neatly and on time. What other conceptions of excellence are possible for her children and how could the balance between student choice and teacher-imposed structure be altered to encourage the children to strive for broader conceptions of excellence? The teacher has a great deal of influence in guiding students to develop their talents and can either facilitate or discourage the learning process.

Child versus Adult

The fifth tension set to be discussed is the child versus the adult. Children use adults as role models for their behavior and are taught to understand what is meant by exemplary social and academic conduct. In the first set of interviews, the children thought that adults were creative and intelligent as well as physically bigger and older. In their view, adults had a shorter life to live than they did and had more responsibility. Although they were usually caring and kind, they could become too strict and too easily annoyed. Most significant was the fact that, even if they were difficult to understand sometimes, they must be obeyed.

Adults have a great deal of power over children and can "boss" them around.

> **Interviewer:** Do you think it would be nice to be an adult?
>
> **Karen:** Well there's only one thing that I think would be great—being able to boss other people around. I enjoy doing that with my dog. Like this Garfield cartoon that says, "I wonder what makes the relationship between pets and owners so bonding? Maybe it's because we all need someone to lord over." And Garfield says, "Yeah, but what do you get out of it?"
>
> (Student Interview, Jan.)

On a number of occasions the children in Ms. W's class have discussed the idea that growing older gives them the opportunity to assume control and to "boss" those who are younger than they are. It would be interesting to know if this idea is more prominent among Ms. W's students because of their highly controlled classroom environment.

How do the children cope with the child versus adult tension and the expectations that they will behave in a more mature or adult fashion? This expectation can be seen as the basis for a child versus adult tension and the tension and conflict created becomes a force that drives children to rely on the support of their own child culture while living in a society in which adults constitute the reference group. Countercontrol and impression management can also be seen as important components of the child culture.

The influence of the child culture in the lived experience of the actel students is to serve as a refuge from teacher and parental expectations and the tensions that result. It frees the children to replace those expectations with expectations that they have commonly agreed upon. As mentioned earlier, the child culture is composed of the ideational "plans-for-action" that are used by children to guide their behavior and to interpret the behavior of other children and adults (Sitton & Mehaffy, 1978).

In the analysis of the social theme, the children described certain aspects of their child culture that were not obvious to adults, such as swearing, secrets, and the discussion of taboo subjects. I thought that the behavior of the children when adults were not present could give a good idea of the accepted behavior within the child culture and so I posed the interview question, "How do your classmates behave differently around adults?" Following are some of the responses to the question.

> **Interviewer:** Do your classmates behave differently when no adult is around?
>
> **Wesley:** Oh yeah! They behave a lot differently.
>
> **Interviewer:** In what ways?

Wesley: Well when they're near a teacher, they often act more serious and when teachers are not around, they act more like a child.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

Interviewer: How do your classmates behave differently around adults?

Warren: When they're around adults, they don't act really silly but when they're not they act dumber. They make strange faces and noises. I do that too.

Interviewer: Who do you make these strange faces and noises around?

Warren: Other kids.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

Interviewer: Do classmates behave differently when they're not around adults?

Sherry: Yes, very! They're louder. We laugh more and we don't do as much work. We're happy, but sometimes when Ms. W is out of the room it gets so noisy I go and get my earmuffs on. They drown out the sound.

Interviewer: What don't you like about their behavior?

Sherry: It's way too noisy.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

Interviewer: Do you and your friends behave differently when you're not around adults?

Jeremy: No—well, we're probably a lot louder. We might slip up sometimes in our behavior because I guess sort of taking advantage of the fact that they're not there. If you're around adults and someone started bugging you, you'd probably just ignore them, like adults would probably tell you to do, but if you weren't, you might kind of take advantage of the situation and get back at them.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

The children realize that their behavior away from adults is childish and they accept it.

> I moved my chair into the hall near the computer and said, "I want to watch what you do."
>
> **Jason:** No, you don't.
>
> **Clayton:** Now we can't fool around.
>
> (Journal Notes, Nov. 9)

It is no secret that they behave differently when adults are not observing but they are uncomfortable with "fooling around" in front of adults. Could this be because they are expected to conform to the expectations that adults have of their behavior? The children continue to describe the ways in which they behave differently when just with their classmates.

> **Interviewer:** Do your friends behave differently when not around adults?
>
> **Jason:** Yeah, like with us, we're not polite with each other. We talk about different stuff.
>
> **Interviewer:** Is it stuff you wouldn't discuss around adults?
>
> **Jason:** Yeah.
>
> **Interviewer:** Is the language also not too polite?
>
> **Jason:** Yeah.
>
> **Interviewer:** Is it important for children to behave in a certain way with friends?
>
> **Jason:** Yeah, it tells you what they're really like.
>
> **Interviewer:** Why is it important for children to have their own way of doing things?

Jason: Well like the children—the parents don't like what they do sometimes so you don't do it when they're around.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

Interviewer: What bothers you about your classmates?

Donna: They swear sometimes and I don't like that.

Interviewer: Do they behave differently around adults?

Donna: Yes, sometimes our classroom is much more noisy when Ms. W isn't in the room. She'll be half way down the hall and she'll hear this big huge ruckus!

Interviewer: You say that they swear sometimes?

Donna: Quite a bit some of them.

Interviewer: Are the topics of conversation sometimes not ones they'd discuss around adults?

Donna: YES!

Interviewer: How do you feel about it?

Donna: I don't like it. If they're not going to talk about it around adults, they shouldn't be talking about it.

Interviewer: Do you find out some important things from your classmates when they are talking about those topics?

Donna: Yeah, I suppose so.

Interviewer: What do you learn?

Donna: Well like some people just have an outer face sort of and they don't act that way around kids. They just don't act the way they do around adults. You find out if they really are that way or you might like them better or worse than you did before.

(Student Interview, Jan.)

Different meanings were given to a child's behavior when with peers than with adults. The children suggested that being noisy and silly was part of their behavior when adults were not around. Because they were discussing their behavior with me, I think that they were describing it as an adult might see it. I don't think that they believed that their behavior was noisy and silly when they were socializing with their peers. It had meaning to them in the child culture and the meanings of their behavior were understood by all of the members of the child culture.

The children felt that they could find out what a classmate was really like when they were just with other children. This is not too surprising in view of the power structure that exists between adults and children in comparison with the power structure among peers. The children might feel more free to be themselves among peers because peers do not have the same kind of power as do adults in evaluating the students' success or failure academically. However, peers do judge the social acceptability of individuals in the class and so can exert some positive or negative influence.

Countercontrol can be seen as part of the child culture and is most evident in the child versus adult tension pair. Countercontrol can be of a more private nature when children are in a power struggle with one another or it can be quite overt when children challenge adult authority. In the first few weeks in the classroom context, there were many incidents described where the children were trying to control the focus of their classmates by using attention getting behavior. Some would talk out of turn or socialize with a friend during a lesson. Others would test Ms. W's patience by being uncooperative. Following are some examples of countercontrol in the classroom.

> After Ms. W had told all to be quiet, the noise level escalated. She had to speak to Jason to tell him to settle down but he just checked to see if she was watching as he continued to flail his arms and try to be crazy. Jason saw me behind a stack of books looking for a book and said "Hi, Mrs. V.H." He waved through the shelf.
>
> Jason is defiant and independent. He does as he pleases as much as he can.
>
> (Journal Notes, Oct. 18)

> Jason and Jeremy are laughing and talking and Ms. W asks what the problem is. They continue to act up and so Ms. W sends them out into the hall. [They are having a great time out in the hall looking at the pictures on the door. There are pictures from camp.]
>
> (Journal Notes, Oct. 24)

> Music 1:45 p.m.—ukelele.
>
> As we were going into music, Ms. W was ushering both Jason and Jeremy back into the room for a "chat". They came "dancing" into the music room with big smiles. Jeremy was sitting in the back and Jason in the front. Jason called back to Jeremy at one point. They seem to be enjoying defying authority.
>
> Jason was acting up again in music and the teacher told him that if he didn't smarten up, he'd be in big trouble.
>
> (Journal Notes, Oct. 24)

> Andrew is being asked if he's finished his newspaper assignment and he says, "I didn't know it was supposed to be done. I'll have it done for tomorrow. I just have the map done." [smiling, laughing]

Ms. W: [exasperated] Hand in the map please.

> [Cole turns around and smiles in a "delighted we're upsetting her" way.
> (Journal Notes, Oct. 18)

> As Mrs. M is asking a question, Cole always blurts out. Shea turns around and tells him to be quiet. Cole blurts out the answer when Todd has been asked to respond and Mrs. M asks Cole, "You like to have other people let you answer Cole, don't you?" Shea turns around and just stares at Cole as a disciplinary technique.
> (Journal Notes, Oct. 19)

Children who exercise countercontrol seem to do so for different reasons. Andrew, Jason, and Jeremy seem to misbehave with the idea that they will delight their classmates by risking disciplinary action by the teacher. Cole seems to misbehave on impulse and risks both the disciplinary action of his teachers and his classmates. There seems to be no social advantage to Cole's countercontrol behavior.

This next journal entry is most interesting because it demonstrates how a student can inform on those who behave in certain undesirable ways. This can be seen as exercising countercontrol against the rules and controls of child culture. This informant was disgusted by some of her classmates' discussion and behavior that were related to the topic of sex. In the latter part of the following journal entry, another kind of countercontrol is exercised relative to my role as a researcher.

> Just before recess Karen wants to talk to me—I lead her to the music room somehow feeling that I am encouraging a squealer or tattle-teller. She sits down and looks at the tape recorder which I do not turn on.
>
> **Karen:** I have specific names of individuals who carry on in ways we've talked about if you're interested.
>
> **Interviewer:** Well Karen I probably know who you are talking about because I have interviewed thirty children and asked the same questions really.
>
> **Karen:** Well, the names of the bad actors are Jason, Jeremy and Jan.
>
> **Interviewer:** You have told me nothing new, Karen, but I appreciate your interest in helping me out. The fact that you mentioned those names confirms what I had already strongly suspected.
>
> **Karen:** We all know what questions you ask because we talk about it you know.
>
> **Interviewer:** I'm glad because then you have a chance to think about the questions in advance and you all know that I'm asking the same questions.
>
> (Journal Notes, Jan. 16)

The same informant further enlightened me about an incident in which the children defined themselves relative to adult authority. Following is a letter that was written to me by Karen on January 30, 1984.

> Dear Mrs. V. H.:
>
> How are things doing on your report? I hope I was helpful in our interviews. I forgot to tell you about one of the more interesting places in an actel student's life. The bus stop. Though some kids that ride the buses get their jollies hucking snowballs and breaking windows, my friends and I unwind in a very different way. There's a lot of ugly rumors about kids at bus stops. People say they love to vandalize property and throw rocks at passerbys. Some people believe them. Here's a story about one who did.

> There were three kids at the bus stop, Giselle, Frank and Joey. Apparently, someone had been throwing hunks of snow on the road, making driving uncomfortable. One short, brown haired man in a red car drove by, saw the snow and said, "Hey you! At the bus stop! Did you do this?" Joey told him they hadn't, in a very impolite tone. Then he looked at them and snickered. (Donna and I arrived at the stop now.) The man said, "If you don't stop grinning, I'm coming over there!" They didn't, so he did. Here the fun started. Giselle slid out of the picture, as did Donna and I, but we still kept watch over the scene. Here's what happened. Man (who could have passed for a hippie in the 1960's): "What's your problem?" Joey: "I dunno." Man: "You!" (points to Frank) Frank: "I didn't do nuthin." (Man yells at them a bit, then) Joey (sarcastically): "So we're sorry." Man: "Don't be." Joey: "Okay, we won't." (Man storms off) End of scene. As you can see, bus stops are every bit as interesting as lunchrooms. We laughed about that episode for weeks.
>
> Miss you back in the classroom (or in back of the classroom!) Come visit us soon.
>
> (Student Letter, Jan.)

Countercontrol is characterized by pushing the limit, being noisy, talking out of turn, and looking for a laugh. To defy authority by being uppity and to then smile through the adult's attempt to discipline is countercontrol in action. The delight felt by students when using countercontrol is a function of feeling powerful enough to cause discomfort to authority figures who sometimes exert power or control in a way that makes the students feel uncomfortable.

Impression management is another mechanism used by the children to cope with the tension produced when they are expected to behave in an adult or exemplary manner. It is most effective when a group uses it with people who do not know the "behind the scenes" behavior. The attempt of the class to manipulate my impression of them was very successful. The fact that I was an adult who was interested in them but who had no power or authority over them accounts for the fact that the impressions of friendliness, sensitivity, and warmth that they wished to project remained consistent with the reality of their classroom behavior. The teacher supports and reinforces this impression management on the part of students. In fact, the teacher's expectations result in the impression management because they ensure a positive evaluation of her and of the class and they contribute in an important way to the maintenance of the 'specialness' of the students.

Impression management can be carried out by a group of people in a class situation or by the individual students in an attempt to put their best foot forward. Because the children behave differently with peers than they do with adults, impression management is well understood in the child culture.

In the first five weeks in the classroom, the children cooperated as a group to present the image of a happy, sensitive and tolerant class. One individual was very successful at presenting himself well as can be seen in the following interview.

> Mr. D: We've had phone calls from people who get to camp where Todd has been and say he's such a wonderful neat child and if ever we didn't want him, they'd take him. But that same night we had a disagreement about something and it was about a very ordinary thing that needed to be done that he found hard to do. I don't consider that out of the ordinary. You put on a good behavior from nine in the morning till four in the afternoon and you kind of fall into line with everybody else and when you get home, you let it all hang out.
>
> (Parent Interview, Nov.)

To let it all hang out for Todd meant to behave in the way that he felt like behaving without being concerned about the impression he was creating.

The children were consistently friendly towards me and I wondered how much of their kindness was an attempt to manipulate my impression of them and how much of it was that they were just very nice people. Regardless of the motive for their behavior, I enjoyed them as individuals and appreciated the positive social atmosphere that they created in the classroom.

The analysis of the tensions and conflicts theme concludes this chapter and aptly so because this theme plays an integral role in the social and curricular lives of the actel children and ties the different themes together. The tensions theme is also closely associated with the expectations theme because many tensions experienced by the children were a result of striving to meet the expectations that they had of themselves and that others had of them. The four themes are truly interdependent in nature and help to present the complexity of the children's experiences in a way that is understandable.

The common thread that ran through each theme was the issue of conformity. Socially the children had to decide the degree to which they would be individuals or the degree to which they would conform to behave like their peers. In curricular activities, Ms. W expected that the students' work would conform to her standards of quality. Expectations of the gifted children were that they would conform to the academic and social demands in an exemplary manner. Control of the children and an overwhelming pressure on them to conform to the demands of peers and adults came through strongly throughout the description of the classroom context and in the thematic analysis. The children seemed to conform quite willingly and there were no mutinous outbreaks where students actively resisted the pressures to conform. Some children practised some countercontrol in the classroom but it was relatively harmless and was not meant to alter the demands made of the students to conform.

Children are socialized from an early age to conform to the demands of their parents and of other adults. When they begin school, they are taught how to behave in an institutional setting and are rewarded for conforming to the rules. It should not be so surprising then that they continue to conform to the demands of the teacher even if the class is made up of gifted children. In fact, maybe gifted children have learned to conform more completely than have children who are not gifted. In many ways, the gifted children could be more consistently successful in a school setting because of their ability as well as their sensitivity to the ways of behaving that would lead to the most rewards. To know the rules and to conform to them is a comfortable and safe way to behave in the classroom. Unless the teacher encourages the children to think critically and gives them the freedom to explore topics of interest, many of them will continue to do what is required to be successful in the classroom context and will conform to the external expectations of teachers and other adults. In my opinion, the responsibility to encourage students to think creatively rests squarely on the shoulders of the teacher.

VII. REFLECTIONS

This research was conducted in order to arrive at a better understanding of the lived experience of gifted students in the actel classroom from the perspective of their child culture. The improvement of the quality of education for the gifted is the ultimate goal of the study and movement in this direction was thought to be most possible if the classroom life of gifted and talented students could be described from their point of view.

A brief summary of the research and the emerging themes follows. A qualitative research approach was used in which information about the experiences of thirty grade six students was collected through the use of participant observation, fieldnotes, interviews, children's illustrations, and letters. Although individual students and groups of students often had different interpretations of their experiences in the classroom context, certain themes, or patterns, emerged from the data that helped to make the child culture in the classroom more understandable. The themes include: the expectations of gifted students that are maintained by themselves and by peers and adults; the tensions and conflicts experienced by the academically talented due to the expectations and choices with which they are confronted; the importance of the social experience in the classroom; and their perception of the curricular demands and activities that were offered in the actel program. Expectations experienced by the children in the classroom context and the tensions and conflicts that they cope with are the themes that permeate the social and curricular experiences and give meaning to them.

The purposes of this reflections chapter are to examine the results of this classroom research and to discuss how the understanding derived from them can contribute to the knowledge base in the area of gifted education. The implications of the findings will be considered and suggestions for future research will be made.

In this research, the discrepancy between the rhetoric of gifted education and the lived experience of children in a classroom for the gifted become strikingly obvious. The rhetoric of gifted education would lead one to believe that programs for the gifted are designed to facilitate the development of the students' individual talents, and that the classroom provides an environment that encourages openness to experience, tolerance for ambiguity, and a willingness to take risks. The fostering of creativity and the developing of the critical thinking ability of the gifted students are top priorities according to the rhetoric of gifted education. Theoretically, the academically talented students are involved with the teacher in a cooperative learning experience and they have the control to tailor their learning environment to facilitate the development of their unique individual potential. The classroom method most commonly recommended for use is the inquiry method because it is student centered and serves to draw out the children's latent or undiscovered talents. The rhetoric of gifted education would lead one to believe that gifted education transcends the merely technical or practical and frees the students to exercise to the limit their intellectual and creative powers. To release the potential of gifted students and to encourage them to question, to create, and to think in ways that would contribute to their own sense of well being and to the well being of those around them is the spirit of gifted education that is promoted by the rhetoric.

The classroom experience of the gifted students in this study defines the gap between the rhetoric and the reality, the theory and the practice. The reality of this particular classroom situation was that while the children were identified as gifted and were invited to join the special actel program, their classroom experience closely approximated that of the regular classroom. The difference was that the actel program offered greater curricular depth, pace and scope and it was a socially nurturing environment for many of the gifted students. Ms. W essentially used more traditional teaching methods and successfully channeled the efforts of her gifted children into performing in ways that continued to define them as gifted according to her definition. The nature of the invitation was that it was an invitation to become embedded in the teacher's personal concept of giftedness. Ms. W's concept of giftedness in the actel class was based on the assumptions that she held concerning student abilities. For example, Ms. W assumed that all of the actel children could understand all of the concepts that were presented in class within a short time and with some coaching. A student who did not have an immediate answer to a question was coached until the answer given was correct. Another assumption held by Ms. W was that her actel students would retain information with little difficulty and that, therefore, she could refer to a concept previously taught without reviewing it. She also assumed that product-oriented learning was the way to develop the giftedness of her students. This assumption resulted in an expectation that time would be used efficiently and productively and that tangible evidence of learning, such as completed assignments and art work, would be brought home or shared with other students. Another assumption held by Ms. W was that the actel children could look forward to success in a professional career if they pursued excellence, which was defined in terms of their willingness to use their time efficiently and productively in her class. These assumption translated into the expectations that Ms. W had of her children which greatly influenced their lived experience in the classroom. Her goal was to prepare the children to continue to excel academically in high school and to eventually be successful and happy adults in society as it exists.

The expectations held by Ms. W regarding the children's behavior were made clear when she told them that they were mature and so should behave in a mature manner. However, their classroom environment was structured in a manner that offered limited freedom to make responsible decisions appropriate to their level of maturity. This inconsistency presented them with a dual reality that may not have been considered by the students on an intellectual level but may very well have elicited an emotional response that was not positive. The children saw the advantages of being more mature, or getting older, as having more power "to boss other people around" and to have dances that were after school and were more like adult dances. Their concept of maturity seemed to embrace much more than conformity to the teacher's expectations. The children seemed to look forward to the day when they would not only be expected to behave maturely but when they would be treated as mature individuals.

Another expectation stated by Ms. W was that the children should be creative. She evaluated their creativity in all subjects on their report cards but the product orientation tended not to allow time for, or encourage, the creative process. The children were also expected to be responsible, independent learners but were given limited freedom within the classroom to think critically and to make choices concerning their involvement in classroom activities that were of personal interest. The emphasis was on making the learning situation unambiguous and understandable for the students rather than challenging them to deal with the ambiguity and complexity of alternative learning possibilities that might extend their ability to think in a flexible manner.

It may be that the rhetoric of gifted education gives our idealizations relative to what constitutes giftedness an unsubstantiated reality status. Rather than focusing on the adaptation of the idealizations to meet the needs of the individual gifted students in a particular classroom setting, the rhetoric is used as an accepted standard or set of expectations that the wider society has of gifted education. The rhetoric is based on a stereotype of the gifted student that includes many myths regarding the nature of giftedness. For example, contrary to popular belief, very few students that are identified as gifted have IQ scores in the genius range (i.e., above 160). Most gifted children are only advanced from two to four years in their academic ability and this is why acceleration often is a successful educational alternative for those who are bright. The assumption that gifted children are strong in all subject areas is another myth that is supported by the content of the rhetoric. This false generalization would lead us to believe that all gifted children have the skills and the motivation needed to operate at the higher levels of thinking in all subject areas. Gifted children are children first, who need the opportunity to mature and develop as do all children. The common myth that all gifted children just need to be set free to develop their enormous potential persists in society more as a result of society's need to have them behave in ways that support the myth than to meet the needs of the individual gifted children.

A significant insight arrived at as a result of this study is that the discrepancy between the rhetoric of gifted education and the classroom experience of gifted children is not due to a lack of understanding of what is needed to develop giftedness but is due rather to lack of societal support that could provide the spirit and energy necessary to implement this understanding. The discrepancy is also due to the fact that the rhetoric of gifted education is affected to varying degrees by the philosophy of the particular teacher, the class makeup, and the cultural context. But what is the cause of this lack of societal spirit that is needed to give direction and thrust to gifted education in general and to teachers of gifted students in particular?

In order to consider this question, it is necessary to look at the school as an institution which reflects the culture in which it is embedded. Schools continue to be agents of cultural transmission and serve to reproduce society rather than to transform it. Individuals make their contribution to society by developing their individual talents in a way that will ensure the continuation of society as it exists. When gifted and talented individuals develop their talents and strive for excellence to a degree that exceeds the usual, they are seen as different and, possibly, as posing a threat to normative ways of thinking in society. The reference group in society is threatened by the possibility that the gifted may become more knowledgeable or accomplished than they are. They want the gifted to develop and to use their talents only to a degree which does not threaten the status quo in society.

The school reflects the attitudes and values of the culture and the teacher is a representative of the dominant adult culture or group of reference. Ms. W was chosen to teach in the program for the gifted on the basis of her superior teaching skills that enabled her to successfully transmit the values of efficiency and productivity as well as values pertaining to the importance of meeting the expectations of people in positions of authority. Parents, students and administrators consider Ms. W to be an excellent teacher who is well organized. Parents gave their full support to Ms. W and were quick to volunteer their help in carrying out special classroom activities. They told me repeatedly how fortunate their children were to have a teacher like Ms. W who made the classroom such a positive place to learn. They admired her commitment and dedication to the academic and social growth of their gifted children. The fact that she would allow me to do my research in her classroom over an extended period of time demonstrates a high degree of courage and openness to self-reflection and growth.

In the interviews, the children indicated that the learning activities were exciting and that the structure provided in the classroom seemed to give them a sense of security and comfort. In order to be successful in maintaining their special status as academically talented, they had to rely on the guidance of the teacher and the feedback and evaluation of their work provided by her. In an article by Allen, Bonner, and Moore (1984), the authors suggest that with both gifted children and their parents, "there is often the fear that what is extraordinary about the child will fade into the ordinary" (p. 327). This may help to explain the willingness on the part of the actel students to conform to the teacher's expectations, because, in so doing, they increased their chances of success in the actel program and therefore ensured the continuation of their special gifted status. They aligned their expectations of themselves with those of Ms. W.

The teacher of this actel class reflected the values of the culture and attempted to transmit these values to her students using essentially more traditional teaching methods. Is there a possibility that schools and teachers as agents of cultural transmission could provide the creative learning environment necessary for gifted students to develop skills that would enable them to transform society as well as to reproduce it? A way to answer this question is to consider how the concept of culture is experienced by the children in the classroom. Spindler (1982) believes that the children's behavior in the classroom and their way of seeing their school experience "is a result of a complex interaction of child culture, adult culture, individual striving, and situational culture" (p. 312). It is the situational culture defined by the teacher in the classroom that can have the greatest influence on gifted students. It provides the teacher with the opportunity to implement teaching approaches that could narrow the gap between the rhetoric of gifted education and classroom practice. Within the situational culture, the potential exists for allowing students to become producers of knowledge rather than predominantly consumers of information.

The implications of the research findings are considered in the following section.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The strength of this qualitative research methodology is that it allows the reader to take from the study what is relevant to his or her unique situation and, as a result, to make more informed educational decisions. Although the individual readers will think of a variety of implications of this research that will fit their particular situations, I will attempt to discuss the more general implications of the findings.

The teacher is the key in shaping the classroom experience of the academically talented children and this has definite implications for teacher training and teacher selection. In the training of teachers of gifted students, the teachers should be made aware of what the goals of gifted education include and also made to understand the influence of societal attitudes and values as they relate to the development of giftedness in the schools. The presentation of an expanded concept of giftedness that encompasses both the spirit of gifted education and classroom practice dimensions is most important to teachers of the gifted. They would also benefit from the opportunity to become involved in learning experiences during their training that were exciting and stimulating and that were organized and planned by a teacher experienced in the use of teaching methods most appropriate for the gifted. To learn how to use the different teaching methods and how to adapt existing curricular materials for use with the gifted would also be important aspects of a teacher training program. The possibility of both reproducing and transforming society by gifted individuals would be a topic for in-depth exploration. Teacher training should focus also on teaching gifted students about how their talents can bring about change and examine possible solutions to some existing problems in society. Creative problem solving techniques would be experienced and mastered by teachers who would be expected to teach them to their students in the classroom. The teachers would be trained in such a way that they could offer their gifted students the opportunity to develop their unique talents but, at the same time, to give them the skills necessary to use these talents in the real world.

Many would argue that the segregated actel classroom is not the ideal context in which to teach gifted students how to use their talents in the real world because it is more removed from that world than the regular classroom. Some believe that to segregate the gifted students is to deny them the opportunity to learn to cope with their giftedness in a real life setting where both gifted and non-gifted individuals are included. Others criticize the actel program as being elitist and ask why all children cannot be treated to the advantages of an enriched curricular experience. On the other side of the issue, those who support the actel program suggest that it is the right of the gifted students to have an education that extends and challenges them just as do the non-gifted. It is assumed that the educational needs of the non-gifted can be met in the regular classroom, while those of the gifted cannot be as adequately met there. The implication inherent in this discussion of the segregation issue is that the needs of the gifted cannot be met in the regular classroom. This is a very serious situation, considering that many gifted students choose to remain in the regular program. It also begs the question, "Why is it not possible to meet the needs of the gifted in the regular classroom?" Most teachers would argue that it is possible to meet the intellectual needs of the gifted in the regular classroom but that, at the same time, it is difficult to meet their social need to have friends who are academically advanced and who have similar interests.

A further implication of this study pertains to the importance of selecting teachers of the gifted according to how closely their teaching styles and beliefs align themselves with those recommended for gifted education. More leadership and guidance should be given to teachers of the gifted, not only by way of offering professional support and encouragement, but also by way of ensuring that the learning environment remains conducive to learning. Educational institutions must become more proactive in their support of their talented students in order to encourage them to develop their gifts fully.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the purposes of this research was to attempt to discern some possible directions for both qualitative and quantitative research in gifted education. Some suggested research questions for future study includes:

1. In what ways could change be brought about to narrow the discrepancy between the rhetoric of gifted education and actual classroom practice?
2. Do the children in actel classes at different grade levels share a common lived experience?
3. What are the changes in the child culture of a group of actel children who are together for four years?
4. Are there elements of the child culture that are common to the different age groups in the four year actel program?
5. How well does the actel program prepare students for regular classroom participation in high school?
6. How does the adjustment to high school differ for graduates of the actel program and gifted children who graduate from regular classrooms?

In conclusion, it is hoped that the description of the lived experience of these gifted children will enable the reader to understand them in a human way and to identify with their thoughts and feelings. It is also hoped that the research findings and their implications for gifted education will be given serious consideration and will offer some direction to those involved in the education of gifted students. If the reader arrived at a better understanding of their lives from their perspective, then the goal of the writer to have the reader make human contact with these children was realized. For, as Konner (1982) states: "When . . . knowledge . . . concerns behavior, especially human behavior, the emergent image must bear a human face" (p. xvii).

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APPENDIX A

September 15, 1983

Dear Parents,

My name is Dianne Van Hesteren and I am a doctoral student in elementary education who is on leave from the Saskatoon Public Board of Education until January 1984, at which time I will return to classroom teaching. For the remainder of 1983, I will be involved in research with bright children in an attempt to understand what it is like to be a student in an actel class. To be more aware of this experience from the student's perspective can help to inform and guide future educational planning. To this end, I will be visiting with your child for a fifteen minute period sometime in the next two weeks. Ms. W and I will draw up a schedule so that the students will not miss important subject matter.

If you have any questons or would like more information, please feel free to call me at Greenfield School. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Dianne Van Hesteren

APPENDIX B

INFORMAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

September, 1983

1. What school did you come from?
2. What made you choose Greenfield?
3. What were advantages and disadvantages of the move?
4. How did you feel at first?
5. How do you feel now?
6. How do you like your classmates?
7. Do you still see friends from your other school?
8. How do you feel about the subject matter and activities in the actel program?
9. If you had a day to plan in school, what would you include?
10. What are your hobbies?
11. What do you want to be when you grow up?
12. Do you think that boys and girls should be friends just like girls and girls or boys and boys are friends?
13. Do many of your classmates have both boy and girl friends?
14. What would other adults or other older children think if you had a friend of the opposite sex?
15. How important is it to be an individual with your classmates?

January, 1984

1. What is it like to be back at school after a holiday? What is best about it? What is worst about it?
2. How does school in January differ from school in December?
3. What are you looking forward to in January?
4. What makes life interesting for you on a day-to-day basis?
5. Who are your friends?
6. Have they changed since September or have your social relationships changed?
7. What's nicest about your friends?
8. In the class, what activities or ways of behaving do you find least acceeptable among your classmates?
9. Are there some who behave differently when they're not around adults?
10. Did you go to the dance? If so, what did you think of it? If not, why not? Explain.
11. How much television do you watch a day?
12. What programs do you like best? Why? How does television influence your school experience?
13. Is it an important part of social talk or classroom discussion?
14. What would you miss most about television if it was not in your house?
15. Did you work on school work during the holidays? What did you do? How did you feel about working about it?
16. Do you like getting your report card?
17. If you could change one thing in school to make it more to your liking, what would it be?
18. What have you learned working on the comppter? How do you think you can use the computer in the future?
19. What do you look forward to most in grade seven?

APPENDIX C

TIME TABLE

TIME TABLE

Term 1983-84
Grade 6 A.T.
Ms. W.

TIME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9:00	U.S.S.R.	→			
9:15	Opening Exercises Current Events	→			
9:30	Spelling	Math	Math	Reading	Reading
10:00	Math	↓	French	↓	↓
RECESS					
11:00	Reading	French	BAND	Math	Math
11:30		Gym		French	French
NOON LUNCH PERIOD					
1:00	Health	Reading	Health	Gym	Band
1:45	Music		Music		Art ↓
RECESS					
2:35	Social	Science	Social	Science	↓
OTHER INFORMATION					

APPENDIX D

REPORT CARD

NOVEMBER Report

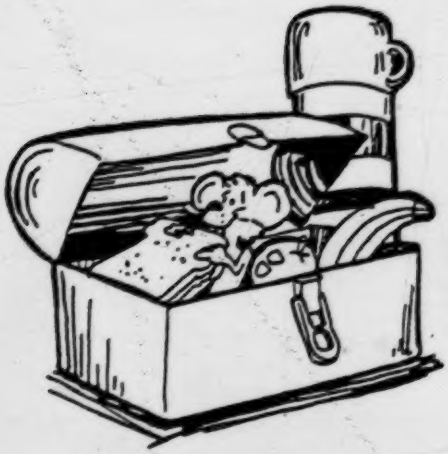
Friday November 18

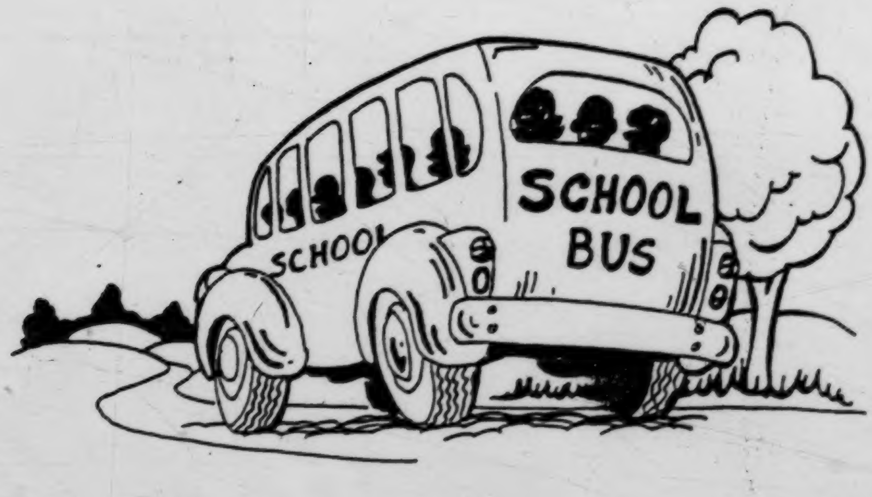
Greenfield School

Student: ____________

____

6W




SCHOOL
SCHOOL
BUS

MATH:

As you are aware, Unit 1 in Math covered the Metric System. We spent six weeks as a class exploring topics related to linear measurement, area, volume, mass and time. The unit quiz is an evaluation of these concepts. It appears that the majority of the students are beginning to gain a stronger understanding of the Metric System; problem solving, however is a skill on which we will concentrate in the units ahead.

Having completed Metric, we are now "forging" ahead with our unit work schedules. Each student is continuing on with the same format as last year. Two of the skills required for this type of system are a) independence in and b) responsibility for work.

With your guidance, each student has plotted a timeline, designed to meet the completion goal of Unit 5, by Christmas. A copy is attached for your reference.

I will continue to moniter and guide the work as we progress.

Unit quizzes are included.

SPELLING:

The first units in spelling heal with a concentration of spelling patterns, rules, hints and exceptions. Each week is devoted to a specific concept whereby students should understand the reason for a word's spelling. Hopefully this study will imporove all of our spelling, as I know that evern I am learning hints each week. All work and quizzes are kept in the student's spelling notebook.

READING :

Our class has completed a poetry unit which has been compiled into a booklet. We explored ten varieties of poetry and the students wrote their own pieces to correspond. I am most impressed with the response and enthusiasm shown by the class towards poetry. It was fun to listen to, and share each other's "masterpieces" while learning about a sometimes neglected aspect of literature.

Each student has chosen three of his/her best poems to be included in a class poetry book. I'm sure you will enjoy the works of art!

Mrs. Earl, our librarian, is currently working with 6W on a webbing unit. It is sometimes difficult to meet the varied needs of the class in reading, due to the wide selection of titles, reading abilities and multitude of possibilities for study and discussion. By using the webbing technique, students have freedom to create their own assignments, suitable for the book they are webbing. To achieve success, certain criteria must be met:

1. students must be completely familiar with content.
2. two or three activities must be developed for the following categories:
    i) remarkable individuals
    ii) through the eyes of a child
    iii) life cycles
    iv) time and change
    v) conflict
3. emphasis is placed on questions containing higher levels of thought and creativity.

Students do not have to do the questions they create, but in order to create activities, the above goals must be met.

I am looking forward to the original ideas created by the students.

We are still working on the webbings; activities and evaluations will be sent home upon completion.

As was the practice last year, each day begins with fifteen minutes of U.S.S.R.(uninterrupted sustained silent reading). Most of the class is using this time very appropriately, and it is easy to see that books are a passion with 6W. I have indicated below if your child is not using this time as designed.

The students are encouraged to use spare time to complete unfinished classroom work, workshops or read. These choices in spare time allow students an opportunity to develop the self discipline necessary for personal success. Many students are making wise choices and are working well. Others still need to develop this independence.

COMMENT RE: U.S.S.R.

SOCIAL STUDIES:

September found our class on the road to Battleford as part of our first mini-unit in Social Studies. The trip provided the group with:

1. a review of the Riel Rebellion,
2. a chance to explore the fascinating W.D.M. and Fort Battleford,
3. a brief acquaintance with rural geography and the surrounding districts of Saskatoon,
4. an opportunity to interact with all Greyston Year Five and Six students.

Trip activities were compiled in a booklet. It is clear that some students put more effort into the completion of their booklets.

SOCIAL STUDIES (cont'd)

Time is always provided in class to go over the answers together and reassemble thoughts and ideas in an organized manner. The booklets are included for your perusal.

A culminating assignment stemming from our trip, was the editing of a magazine. The four page mini-magazine was an individual project, relating to some aspect of our tour. I am very proud of the results and with the intensity of the class during work sessions. Once again, the creativity of the students is most evident. Magazine evaluations are attached; the magazines have been laminated and included with this report.

An exciting project, "the newspaper", included tasks related to study of the paper, the writing of summer newsstories, and the completion of newslabs. The final group assignment was to publish a newspaper based on an era in history. The students jumped into the task feet first, after a day of research at the public library. The creativity , talent, and excellent group cooperation desplayed by our class resulted in three tremendous papers. As you are aware, individual copies were prepared for parents, courtesy of the help of Mr. Enchin.

CURRENT EVENTS:

Current events continues to play an important part of our morning exercises. We use this time to review current and personal news happenings, while providing the opportunity for discussion. The current events responsibility occurs on a daily rotating basis according to alphabetical order. Some students do experience problems with "remembering" when it is their turn. This is a responsibility

I would ask each student to assume carefully and note when their turn arises. I am including an alphabetical class list; as the turns are taken, the students can check the names and hence become aware of when their turn is approaching.

Current events quizzes are administered on Friday morning. The quizzes are kept in a duotang and included for your perusal. The quiz scores are often an indication of the student's listening skills. Poor scores are usually the result of failure to "actively listen" to classmates during discussion time.

SCIENCE:

The first few weeks of school were spent in preparation for camp. The students prepared their teaching projects during this time. This assignment required the students to:

1) pre-plan the activity,
2) gather supplies, and
3) organize teaching roles within the group.

I was very pleased with the enthusiasm shown and effort put forth to make these teaching projects a success.

The ability to think clearly and reason logically is a primary goal of education. With this in mind, 6W put reasoning skills to work during a unit of LOGIC. Each student has completed a booklet of Logic problems of six types: analogies, matrix, table, circle, syllogisms and Venn Diagrams.

The sessions were organized so that the students worked in groups to solve the problems after initial instruction. New groups were formed for each new type of logic problem. The students worked very cooperatively in their groups, willingness to share ideas was most obvious and the logical thinking skills were indeed tested.

The booklet is included with this report.

Following logic, 6W will be working on a Seeds program, which deals with energy - its sources, uses and conservation. It is most interesting and students will be engaged in a variety of activities to develop the concepts.

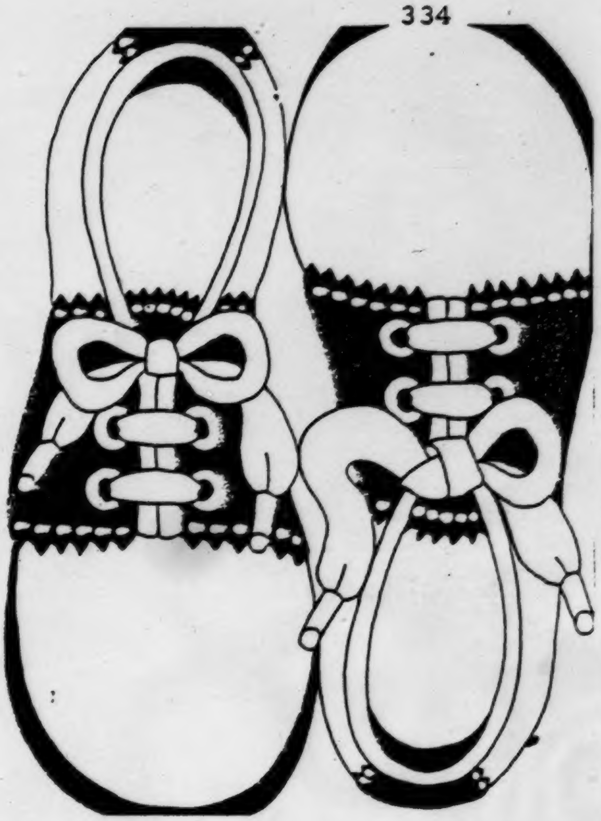
HEALTH:

The Health Unit, just completed, has proven to be most interesting for the class and me. With the use of a new manual "Fitness for Life", we explored the facets of fitness and the health related benefits. The course was most helpful as we were introduced to a variety of ideas, skills and activities which are meaningful for our personal well-being.

Theory and practice were combined appropriately to further enhance the learning.

The final assignment was the creation of "The Ten Commandments for Physical Fitness". The charts provided me with interesting insights into the variety of viewpoints on the topic. The Health booklets are included with the report. Up and coming unit: The Human Body.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION:



As we have learned from our health unit, physical fitness does affect the physical and mental well-being of an individual. Therefore, one of the projects 6W has undertaken has been the twelve-minute goal by increasing our running times by one minute each session. We hope to make the final run at the Field House. At this time, the distance will be recorded and compared to the charts in our health booklets.

I am so pleased with the positive attitude shown by the students toward fitness; not only attitude, but the condition of our class is most impressive. Keep up the good work, group!

Our physical education program is designed to provide a smattering of games, skills, gymnastics and folkdance. The activities/ skills covered thus far include:

1) soccer skills - games,
2) low organizational games - King's court
   - tag games,
3) ball control skills with feet, hands,
4) various relays,
5) Virginnia Reel Folkdance.

We were very fortunate to be introduced to modern dance by way of two American visitors.

NAME OF STUDENT: ____________________

TWELVE MINUTE FITNESS RUN.... THURSDAY NOVEMBER 17, 1983

The twelve minute run is a test of cardiovascular fitness. As a class, we have worked toward this goal gradually, during our physical education classes in school.

Below is a chart, explaining the results of one's personal fitness number.

This number is calculated by dividing the number of laps run at the Field House by the number of laps required to equal 1 mile(inside lane=8
outside lane=7)

example: number of laps run on inside lane = 12
personal fitness number = 12/8 = 1.5
rating from the chart = good

RATINGS CHART:

very poor: less than .95
poor : .95 - 1.14
fair : 1.15 - 1.34
good : 1.35 - 1.64
excellent : 1.65 and over

CALCULATION OF STUDENT RUN:

number of laps run: ____________________

inside or outside; circle one

calculation: laps ____________ divided by ____________ (7, Or 8)

result:

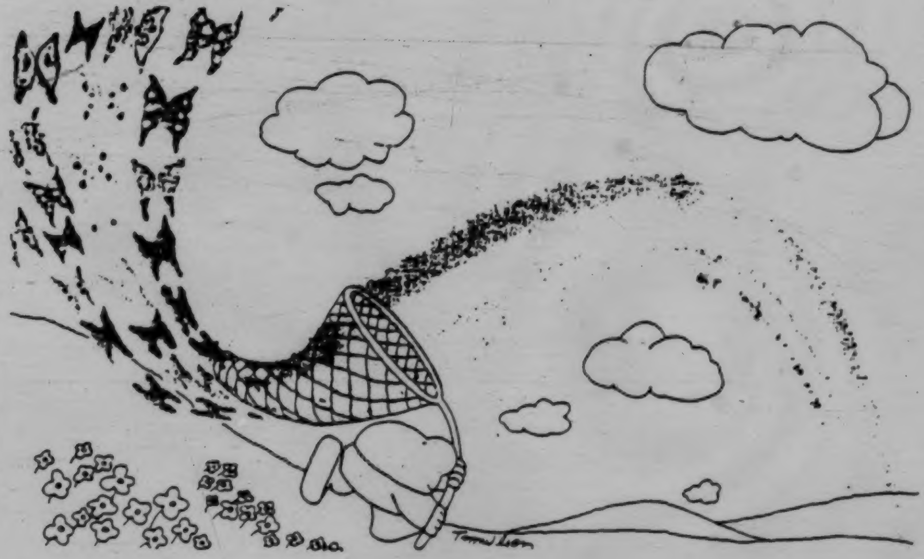
____

rating: ____________________

The Intramural Program for all year five and six students is organized somewhat differently than last year. Students no longer belong to a specific "house" and participation is strictly voluntary. Prior to each new activity, all students gather together to learn about the upcoming program; teams are formed from the list of signed participants. A clinic is then held during a noonhour to familiarize students and referees with rules and procedures. We do not keep track of wins or losses, but stress participation and enjoyment!

The two activities thus far, indoor soccer and King's court have proven to be most successful.

ART:



Art classes are scheduled for Friday afternoon; any necessary supplies and materials will usually be needed for this day.

As in the past, art is designed to provide the opportunity for:

INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT FORM
BY SUBJECT

SUBJECT/TOPIC	Consistently	inconsistently	Needs attention in this area
MATH			
- daily work maintained			
- work completed in an organized manner . . . (readable, spaced well, numbered)			
- concepts understood			
SPELLING			
- spelling in daily work is accurate			
- weekly lists show evidence of spelling skill and study			
READING			
- daily work and assignments were kept up to date			
- work was completed neatly			
- written work is completed, clear, well-constructed sentences			
ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS (Social Studies, Science, Health)			
- the student takes pride in desk and personal belongings			
- assignments were organized into booklets or binders throughout the year - all assignments in tact			
- used class time efficiently to complete assignments			
- did not rush through work foresaking thought and neatness			
- the student can locate information			
- the student can organize information in a concise manner			
- the student followed directions in activities undertaken			
- level of thought was mature			
CREATIVITY			
- the student has shown creativity and originality in work throughout the year			

STUDENT ASSESSMENT EVALUATION

NAME ________________________________

	VERY GOOD	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS TO IMPROVE
WORK AND STUDY HABITS			
1. Listens attentively			
2. Follows oral and/or written directions			
3. Does assignments and daily work thoroughly and promptly			
4. Can collect and organize information			
5. Organizes personal time efficiently			
6. Concentrates on the task at hand			
7. Uses reference material confidently			
8. Maintains neatness and organization of personal belongings			
9. Makes a sincere effort to solve work problems before requesting assistance			
10. Reads a great deal on his/her own			
11. Demonstrates creativity of thought via written and oral work			
12. Strives to produce quality work			
GROUP PERFORMANCE			
1. Participates effectively in group situations			
2. Shows respect for the ideas and feelings of others			
3. Gets along well with other students			
4. Participates well in school activities			
INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE			
1. Is courteous and respectful			
2. Exhibits self control			
3. Accepts responsibility for work and actions			
4. Demonstrates leadership qualities			
5. Respects rules and authority			
6. Accepts constructive criticism			
7. Expresses him/herself well - orally			
8. Maintains a neat and orderly personal appearance			